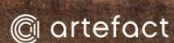


Newcastle Regional Organics Processing Facility

Non-Aboriginal Statement of Heritage
Impact

Report to MRA Consulting

June 2026



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MidCoast Council owns and operates a waste disposal and recycling facility at Darawank, near Tuncurry that services the needs of the local community and commercial businesses for waste disposal and resource recovery.

Due to the NSW mandate for all Councils to provide a collection service for food organics and garden organics by 2030, Council has sought an operator to establish FOGO processing in close proximity to the Tuncurry Waste Management Centre. NALG is contracted to provide a fully enclosed facility utilising In-Vessel Composting and Dry Anaerobic Digestion technology.

The project has been designated State Significant Development. The Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements were issued on the 18 June 2025.

This Statement of Heritage Impact has been prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment for MRA Consulting Group to assess the potential impact of the proposal on non-Indigenous (historical) cultural values and address the following:

Non-Aboriginal Cultural Heritage – a non-Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment (including both cultural and archaeological significance) which must detail potential impacts on heritage assets and any proposed management and mitigation measures.

Overview of findings

This report has made the following conclusions:

- The study area is not listed on any heritage registers
- The nearest listed heritage item is approximately 800m to the west – the *Former Darawank Public School* (Schedule 5 of the Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2014 as Item I19)
- The study area is unlikely to contain a significant historical archaeological resource or archaeological relics as protected by the NSW *Heritage Act 1977*
- The proposal is considered to be acceptable from a historical heritage perspective and will not result in adverse impacts to heritage values or items.

Recommendations

An Unexpected Finds Procedure should be implemented for all excavation works. Should unexpected 'relics' be discovered during works Heritage NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet (delegate of the NSW Heritage Office) is to be notified of the discovery of any unexpected relics in accordance with Section 146 of the NSW *Heritage Act 1977*. Depending on the nature of the discovery, additional assessment and possibly an excavation permit may be required prior to the recommencement of excavation in the affected area.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

MidCoast Council (MCC) owns and operates a waste disposal and recycling facility at Darawank, near Tuncurry that services the needs of the local community and commercial businesses for waste disposal and resource recovery.

Due to the NSW mandate for all Councils to provide a collection service for food organics and garden organics (FOGO) by 2030, Council has sought an operator to establish FOGO processing in close proximity to the Tuncurry Waste Management Centre. NALG is contracted to provide a fully enclosed facility utilising In-Vessel Composting (IVC) and Dry Anaerobic Digestion (AD) technology.

The project has been designated State Significant Development (SSD). The Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) were issued on the 18 June 2025.

This Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) has been prepared by Artefact Heritage (Artefact) for MRA Consulting Group to assess the potential impact of the proposal on non-Indigenous (historical) cultural values and address the following SEAR:

Non-Aboriginal Cultural Heritage – a non-Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment (including both cultural and archaeological significance) which must detail potential impacts on heritage assets and any proposed management and mitigation measures.

1.2 Study area

The study area comprises Lot 5 of DP 1089990, Midge Orchid Rd, Tuncurry (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The study area.

1.3 Approach and methodology

This report was prepared in accordance with the principles and procedures established by the following documents:

- *Guidelines for preparing a statement of heritage impact* (NSW Heritage Office, Department of Planning and Environment 2023)
- *The Burra Charter (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance)* (Australia ICOMOS 2013)
 - *Assessing heritage significance - Guidelines for assessing places and objects against the Heritage Council of NSW criteria* (NSW Heritage Office, Department of Planning and Environment 2023)
- *Historical Archaeology Code of Practice* (Heritage Office 2006).

1.4 Limitations

This report provides an assessment of historical (non-Aboriginal) archaeological remains and their values only and does not assess Aboriginal cultural heritage.

This report uses historical documentation prepared by third party heritage professionals. Historical research has been undertaken to supplement this existing information.

1.5 Author identification

This report was prepared by Jenny Winnett (Technical Director), of Artefact Heritage and Environment. Jenny is a historical consultant with over 18 years of experience. The report was reviewed by Josh Symons (Technical Director), of Artefact Heritage and Environment

2.0 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

2.1 Overview

This section discusses the heritage management framework, notably legislative and policy context, applicable to the proposed development and study area.

2.2 Identification of heritage listed items

Heritage listed items were identified through a search of relevant state and federal statutory and non-statutory heritage registers:

- Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL)
- National Heritage List (NHL)
- State Heritage Register (SHR)
- Section 170 Heritage and Conservation Registers
- NSW State Heritage Inventory database
- Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan (LEP) (2014)
- Register of the National Estate (RNE)
- National Trust of Australia (NSW) register.

Items listed on these registers have been previously assessed against the NSW Heritage Assessment guidelines. Assessments of heritage significance as they appear in relevant heritage inventory sheets and documents, are provided in this assessment.

There are several items of legislation that are relevant to the current study area. A summary of the relevant Acts and the potential legislative implications are provided below.

2.3 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) provides a legislative framework for the protection and management of matters of national environmental significance, that is, flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places of national and international importance. Heritage items are protected through their inscription on the World Heritage List, Commonwealth Heritage List, or the National Heritage List. The EPBC Act stipulates that a person who has proposed an action that will, or is likely to, have a significant impact on a World, National or Commonwealth Heritage site must refer the action to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

2.3.1 Commonwealth Heritage List

The Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) has been established to list places of outstanding heritage significance to Australia. Established under the EPBC Act, the CHL comprises natural, Indigenous and historic heritage places on Commonwealth lands and waters or under Australian Government control.

There are no items listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List within the study area.

2.3.2 National Heritage List

The National Heritage List (NHL) has been established to list places of outstanding heritage significance to Australia, including places overseas. There are nine matters of national environmental significance, these include Australia's world heritage properties (as listed on the World Heritage List [WHL]), national heritage places, wetlands of international importance (listed under the Ramsar Convention), migratory species, listed threatened and ecological communities, Commonwealth marine areas, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, nuclear actions including uranium mining, and water resources in relation to coal seam gas developments and large coal mining developments.

There are no items listed on the National Heritage List within the study area.

2.4 Heritage Act 1977

The NSW *Heritage Act 1977* (Heritage Act) provides protection for items of 'environmental heritage' in NSW. 'Environmental heritage' includes places, buildings, works, relics, movable objects or precincts considered significant based on historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic values. Items considered to be significant to the State are listed on the SHR and cannot be demolished, altered, moved or damaged, or their significance altered without approval from the Heritage Council of NSW.

2.4.1 State Heritage Register

The SHR was established under Section 22 of the Heritage Act and is a list of places and objects of particular importance to the people of NSW, including archaeological sites. The SHR is administered by Heritage NSW, and includes a diverse range of over 1,500 items, in both private and public ownership. To be listed, an item must be deemed to be of heritage significance for the whole of NSW. For works to an SHR item, a Section 60 application must be prepared for works that are not exempt under Section 57(2) of the Heritage Act.

There are no items within the study area which are listed on the State Heritage Register.

2.4.2 Archaeological relics and works

The Heritage Act also provides protection for 'relics', which includes archaeological material or deposits. Section 4 (1) of the Heritage Act (as amended in 2009) defines a relic as:

"...any deposit, artefact, object or material evidence that:

- (a) relates to the settlement of the area that comprises New South Wales, not being Aboriginal settlement, and*
- (b) is of State or local heritage significance"*

Sections 139 to 145 of the Heritage Act prevent the excavation or disturbance of land known or likely to contain relics, unless under an excavation permit. Section 139 (1) states:

A person must not disturb or excavate any land knowingly or having reasonable cause to suspect that the disturbance or excavation will or is likely to result in a relic being discovered, exposed, damaged or destroyed unless the disturbance is carried out in accordance with an excavation permit.

Excavation permits are issued by the Heritage Council of NSW, or its Delegate, under Section 140 of the Heritage Act for relics not listed on the SHR or under Section 60 for impacts within SHR curtilages. An application for an excavation permit must be supported by an Archaeological Research Design (ARD) and Archaeological Assessment prepared in accordance with the NSW Heritage

Division archaeological guidelines. Minor works that would have a minimal impact on archaeological relics may be granted an exception under Section 139 (4) or an exemption under Section 57 (2) of the Heritage Act. However, the proposal is subject to Part 5.2 (State significant infrastructure) provisions of the EP&A Act, and therefore excavation permits, or exemptions would not be required.

Items identified as 'works' do not typically trigger reporting obligations under the Heritage Act, Examples of 'works' include:

- Former road surfaces or pavement and kerbing
- Railway infrastructure
- Former water supply (wells, cisterns, drains, pipes) and other service infrastructure
- Building footings associated with former infrastructure facilities.

2.4.3 Section 170 registers

Under the Heritage Act all government agencies are required to identify, conserve and manage heritage items in their ownership or control. Section 170 (s170) requires all government agencies to maintain a Heritage and Conservation Register that lists all heritage assets and an assessment of the significance of each asset. They must also ensure that all items inscribed on its list are maintained with due diligence in accordance with State Owned Heritage Management Principles approved by the Government on advice of the NSW Heritage Council. These principles serve to protect and conserve the heritage significance of items and are based on NSW heritage legislation and guidelines.

There are no items within the study area which are listed on a Section 170 register.

2.5 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) establishes the framework for cultural heritage values to be formally assessed in the land use planning and development consent process. The EP&A Act requires that environmental impacts are considered prior to land development; this includes impacts on cultural heritage items and places as well as archaeological sites and deposits.

The EP&A Act also requires that local governments prepare planning instruments (such as Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans [DCPs]) in accordance with the EP&A Act to provide guidance on the level of environmental assessment required. The study area falls within the boundaries of the Great Lakes region of the Mid-Coast local government areas. Schedule 5 of each of the *Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2014* (Great Lakes LEP) includes a list of items/sites of heritage significance within this LGA.

The closest heritage item listed on the LEP is I19 *Former Darawank Public School*, located approximately 800m to the west of the study area. See Figure 2.

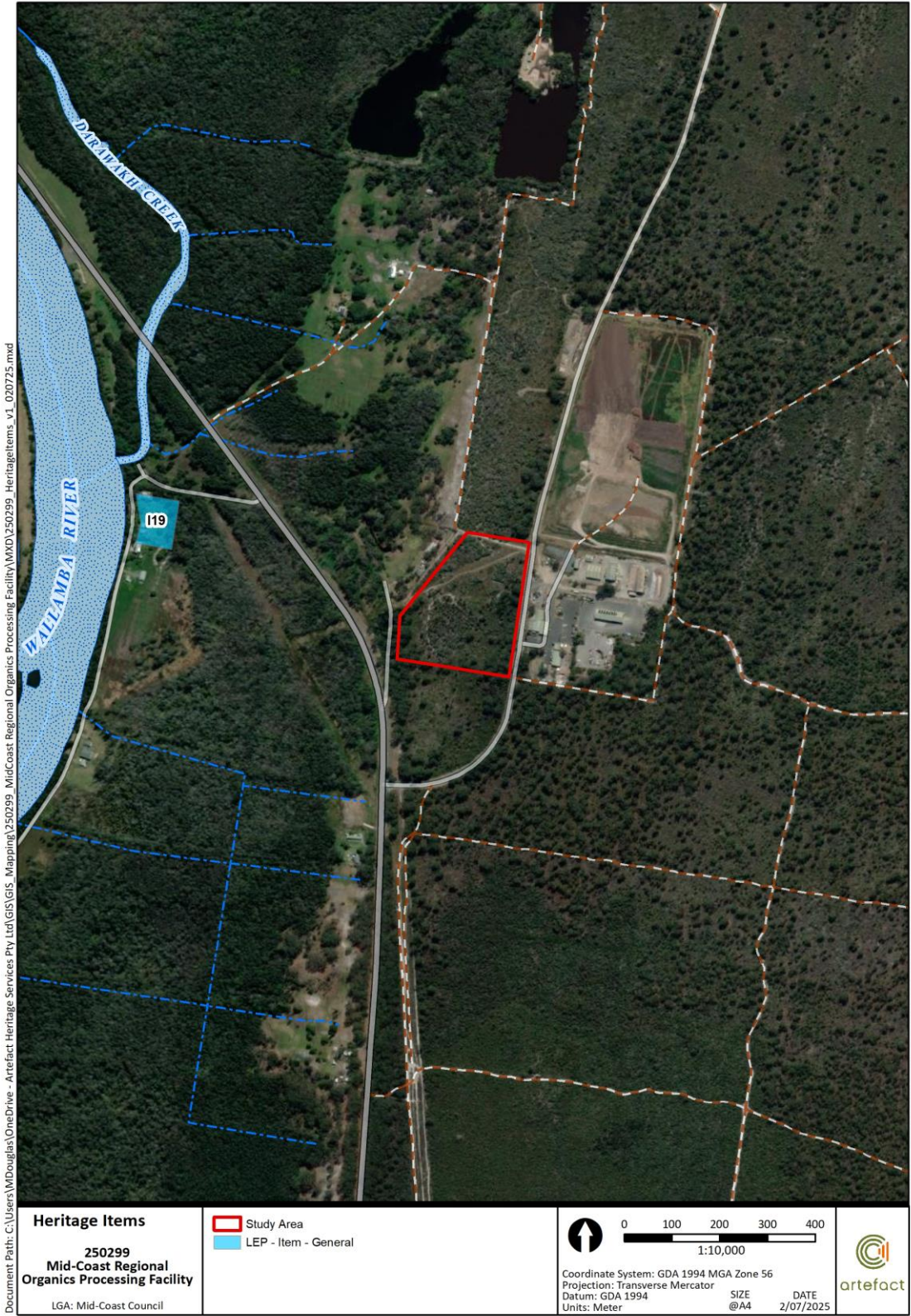


Figure 2: Listed heritage items.

3.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Aboriginal history

At the time of European settlement, the Great Lakes area was believed to be inhabited by two Aboriginal tribes. *The Great Lakes Council Heritage study* notes:

The Great Lakes area was peopled, almost entirely, by the Worimi tribe, who occupied the area from Blackhead in the north, south to the Hunter River and west to near Barrington Tops. The Biripi people occupied the northern most part of the Council area from around Blackhead north to around Kew¹.

Most Aboriginal people in the Great Lakes area identify as being of Worimi descent², and both the Worimi and Biripi tribes spoke dialects of the Kattang language³.



Figure 3: Map of Aboriginal nations. Source: Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS (David R Horton – creator)⁴

¹ Smith, Gary 'Great Lakes Council Heritage Study, May 2007, p 19, URL: <https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/plan-amp-build/stage-2/building-in-restricted-areas/great-lakes-council-heritage-study.pdf> date accessed 23 June 2022

² Worimi Forster Community, n.d.'Our History' Worimi Forster Community, Our Storylines, URL: <https://forster.storylines.com.au/2015/06/09/ourhistory/> date accessed 23 June 2022

³ Marr, Narelle, 1995, 'Aboriginal history of the Great Lakes District (extract from Community Profile), Great Lakes Council, URL: <https://www.yumpu.com/user/greatlakes.nsw.gov.au>, accessed 20 June 2022.

⁴ Worimi Forster Community, n.d.'Our History' Worimi Forster Community, Our Storylines

The original Aboriginal placename for Forster was Minimbah⁵. Modern day Tuncurry, established as North Forster by early settlers, was renamed the original Aboriginal place name of Tuncurry in 1875 due to a cordial relationship between the European settlers and the local aboriginal people⁶

The people who occupied the area around Wallis Lake, called Wallamba, had potentially up to 500 members prior to contact with European settlers⁷. Fire was an important feature of life for the local community and "...the middens around the Wallis Lake area suggest that food from the lake and sea was abundant, as well as wallabies, kangaroos, echidnas, waterfowl and fruit bats" ⁸.

3.2 Non-Aboriginal settlement

3.2.1 Early non-Aboriginal land grants and settlement

The Forster-Tuncurry area was part of the early explorations of both Captain James Cook and explorer and surveyor John Oxley, who travelled through the area in 1818. The Forster and the Tuncurry coastline was first sighted by Captain Cook on 12 May 1770 while sailing along the east coast. In his observations, Cook noted the presence of "natives" and named 'Cape Hawke.' By the early 1800s, timber-getters settled the area to exploit the cedar, pine and tallow wood resources around Cape Hawke. Rainforests were cleared and logs floated along the Wang Wauk River and Wallis Lake to the coast for transportation.

In 1826, a one million-acre grant was given to the Australian Agricultural Company (AAC) "...for the purposes of breeding livestock, establishing a fine wool industry and cultivating crops".⁹ However, due to the unsuitability of the soils for agricultural pursuits, the Australian Agricultural Company's enterprises on their Port Stephens estate were found "not to be remunerative"¹⁰ Around 1860, the grant reverted to the crown and land was made available for sale to private settlers.¹¹

3.2.2 Settlement of Forster, Tuncurry and Darwank

The first known European settlers to occupy the Forster area were George Garlick Godwin and his family in 1862¹². The area was known by its aboriginal name Minimbah, until it was named Forster in 1870¹³. In the 1870s, a sawmill was established by John Breckenridge in Forster, subsequently followed by shipbuilding activity.¹⁴

Scottish emigrant John Wright was amongst the first settlers to occupy North Forster in 1875. ¹⁵ Wright renamed North Forster, adopting the Aboriginal place name of Tuncurry, meaning 'plenty of fish'. ¹⁶ In 1877 Wright took a 99 year lease on land on the foreshore (now known as John Wright

⁵Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August 2007, 'Forster Tuncurry' *Sydney Morning Herald*, URL: <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/forster-tuncurry-20070816-gdkq39.html>, accessed 23 June 2022

⁶Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August 2007, 'Forster Tuncurry' *Sydney Morning Herald*

⁷ Leon, Mick, n.d. *Worimi People, The History of the Worimi People*, date accessed 29 August 2022, URL: <http://www.tobwabba.com.au/worimi/>

⁸ Leon, Mick, n.d. *Worimi People, The History of the Worimi People*, date accessed 29 August 2022, URL: <http://www.tobwabba.com.au/worimi/>

⁹ Smith, Gary, 2007, p 21

¹⁰ 1857 'The Australian Agricultural Company' *Empire (Sydney, NSW : 1850 - 1875)*, 25 June, p. 5

¹¹ Great Lakes Council, 'Heritage Study 2007', p14

¹² Worimi Forster Community, n.d. 'Our History' Worimi Forster Community, Our Storylines

¹³Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August 2007, 'Forster Tuncurry' *Sydney Morning Herald*, URL: <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/forster-tuncurry-20070816-gdkq39.html>, accessed 23 June 2022

¹⁴ Great Lakes Museum

¹⁵ State Heritage Inventory, *John Wright Park*, accessed 3 Aug 2022, URL: <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=1650621>

¹⁶Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August 2007, 'Forster Tuncurry' *Sydney Morning Herald*; Worimi Forster Community, n.d. Our Storylines, URL: <https://forster.storylines.com.au/2015/06/09/ourhistory/>

Park)¹⁷. He established a sawmill, a store, a ship building yard, and housing for his employees and family¹⁸. Wright's shipyard played a central role in the establishment of Tuncurry as many wooden ships for the Australian coastal trade were built there¹⁹. Timber was cut from the rich forestland along the lakeshore and loaded onto log punts which were transported to Wright's mill at Tuncurry for processing²⁰. The shipyard contributed much to the growth of the area and local employment, including the employment of Aboriginal men.²¹

The principal industries in Foster-Tuncurry in the late nineteenth century were "timber-getting, milling, shipbuilding and fishing... with sailing ships ...[and later] steamships carrying fortnightly cargoes to Sydney"²². As many of these industries relied on navigating the lake, break walls were built on both sides of the lake entrance to increase the navigability of Wallis Lake²³. In 1893, Tuncurry was declared a village.²⁴

Darawank developed as James Brown, a farmer bought 100 acres of farmland along the Wallamba River in 1889.²⁵ That year, two acres of this land was resumed for the purpose of establishing the Darawak Public School.²⁶ The former school, completed in 1891, is listed on the Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2014, Listing number I19.²⁷

As the respective populations of Forster and Tuncurry grew, so did the requirement for transport across the lake. The first commercial passenger ferry service across Wallis Lake was a row boat ferry which commenced operation in 1890²⁸.

From 1912, land at Darawank, 10 kilometres north of Tuncurry began to be cleared in preparation for the establishment of pine plantations.

Shipbuilding continued as an important industry in the area and after the United States entry into the Second World War in 1941, John Wright Shipyards was one of many shipbuilding firms engaged to construct a large number of wooden vessels for the war effort.²⁹ Under the management of John Wright's son Ernest Wright, the mill and shipyard continued operating until 1954³⁰.

¹⁷ Smith, Gary 'Great Lakes Council Heritage Study, May 2007, p 32

¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August 2007, 'Forster Tuncurry' *Sydney Morning Herald*

¹⁹ Black Diamond Images, 2020, *Circa 1920-30s Tuncurry Working Waterfront Mosaic at the Entrance to John Wrights Park, Tuncurry NSW*, accessed via Flickr on 3 August 2022, URL: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/blackdiamondimages/10049128783>

²⁰ Black Diamond Images, 2020, *Circa 1920-30s Tuncurry Working Waterfront Mosaic at the Entrance to John Wrights Park, Tuncurry NSW*

²¹

²² Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August 2007, 'Forster Tuncurry' *Sydney Morning Herald*

²³ Click History, 2014, *"The Tanks" Namesake*, Click History: Great Lakes, Published: 15 Feb 2014, accessed 4 Aug 2022, URL: <https://clickhistorygreatlakes.wordpress.com/tag/forster-nsw/>

²⁴ Great Lakes Council, 'Heritage Study 2007', p15

²⁵ "Darawank Public School", Mid-Coast Stories, Mid Coast Council, n.d., <https://midcoaststories.com/2018/08/darawank-public-school/>, citing Land & Property Information, Vol-Fol: 919-8.

²⁶ "Darawank Public School", citing Findmypast.com.au. NSW will books 1800-1952. James Brown will 1893.

²⁷ NSW State Heritage Inventory, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=1650020>

²⁸ Cookie, Graham, 2017, Tuncurry-Forster Ferry Crossing – Tuncurry NSW, *Australian Historical Markers on Waymarking.com*, posted 12 May 2017, accessed: 3 Aug 2022, URL:

https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMX72W_Tuncurry_Forster_Ferry_Crossing_Tuncurry_NSW

²⁹ Borough, Chris & Nicholson, Graham, 2019, #1 WT85 – the only reviving vessel built at Wright's Tuncurry shipyard, *Great Lakes Advocate*, first published 12 June 2019 and updated 18 June 2019. Accessed 3 August 2022. URL: <https://www.greatlakesadvocate.com.au/story/6211414/the-shipping-news-stories-from-the-great-lakes-and-manning-river/>

³⁰ Black Diamond Images, 2020, *Circa 1920-30s Tuncurry Working Waterfront Mosaic at the Entrance to John Wrights Park, Tuncurry NSW*

After the Second World War, tourism began to boom, becoming an important part of the local economy³¹. This put increased pressure on the vehicular punt, which had carried passengers and vehicles across the lake from 1922³². The punt services continued to operate until on 18 July 1959, the Forster-Tuncurry Bridge opened, linking the twin cities by road.³³

3.2.3 The study area

The study area is located approximately 10 kilometres north of Tuncurry and south of the Darawakh Nature Reserve. It was originally part of land purchased by Samuel Brown in 1884. Samuel was the son of James Brown, who had purchased large amounts of property on the Wallamba River to the west of the study area. In 1894 the study area is noted as having loose sandy soil and being timbered by oak, blackbutt, gum and honeysuckle (Figure 4).

Brown's obituary from the 21 May 1932 states that he worked as a fireman (also noted as being an Engine Driver) at Wrights timber mill in Tuncurry for 30 years. His death notice states he is 'of Tuncurry' suggesting that he resided in town, rather than on the study area.

The property was then purchased by Alfred Ernest Bunt in the early 20th century (see Figure 6). His 1934 obituary states that he was a well known teamster in the Tuncurry area, but notes he only moved to the Tuncurry district in the early 1930s. This suggests he did not reside on the study area.³⁴

Reports from the early 20th century describe the general area as 'a waste land consisting of sand dunes and useless for other purposes' with the area 'covered in stunted valueless trees and bracken fern.'³⁵ These reports were prepared to assess the suitability of the area for the establishment of a prison farm and pine plantation. As a result, a Reafforestation Prison Camp established in 1913 to the north-east of the study area (Figure 5). The current study area does not appear to have been part of this camp or plantation.

In 1918 the study area was purchased from Bunt by the Forest Department and became known as Tuncurry State Forest No. 283.

Darawakh Creek, which flows into the Wallamba River, was added to the Geographical Names Board in 1976.³⁶ The Darawank Nature Reserve, which covers an area of 1192 hectares was created in March 1999.³⁷

In 1998, Great Lakes Council approved a Development Application by J.R. Richards and Sons to build a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) adjacent to the Tuncurry tip. The land was owned by the State Government but was purchased by Council.³⁸

³¹ Click History, 2014, *Happy Campers – Tuncurry Camping Reserve c. 1940*, Click History: Great Lakes, Published: 28 Apr 2014, accessed 4 Aug 2022, URL: <https://clickhistorygreatlakes.wordpress.com/tag/tuncurry-nsw/>

³² Cookie, Graham, 2017, Tuncurry-Forster Ferry Crossing – Tuncurry NSW, *Australian Historical Markers on Waymarking.com*, posted 12 May 2017

³³ Cookie, Graham, 2017, Tuncurry-Forster Ferry Crossing – Tuncurry NSW, *Australian Historical Markers on Waymarking.com*, posted 12 May 2017

³⁴ The Northern Champion 8 August 1934

³⁵ Extracts from Annual Reports of the Comptroller-General of Prisons in Great Lakes Historical Society, Tuncurry Prison Farm 1911 -1938 Via RPS 2014

³⁶ Geographical Names Board, <https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/fabc98ec-a2e5-49e3-baf4-2f8df242f8d7>

³⁷ "Darawank Nature Reserve", NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, URL: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/darawank-nature-reserve>

³⁸ 1998 'Cr Bob Stuart reports', *Nota (Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens, NSW : 1970 - 1999)*, 5 March, p. 2. , viewed 03 Jul 2025, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article258503455>

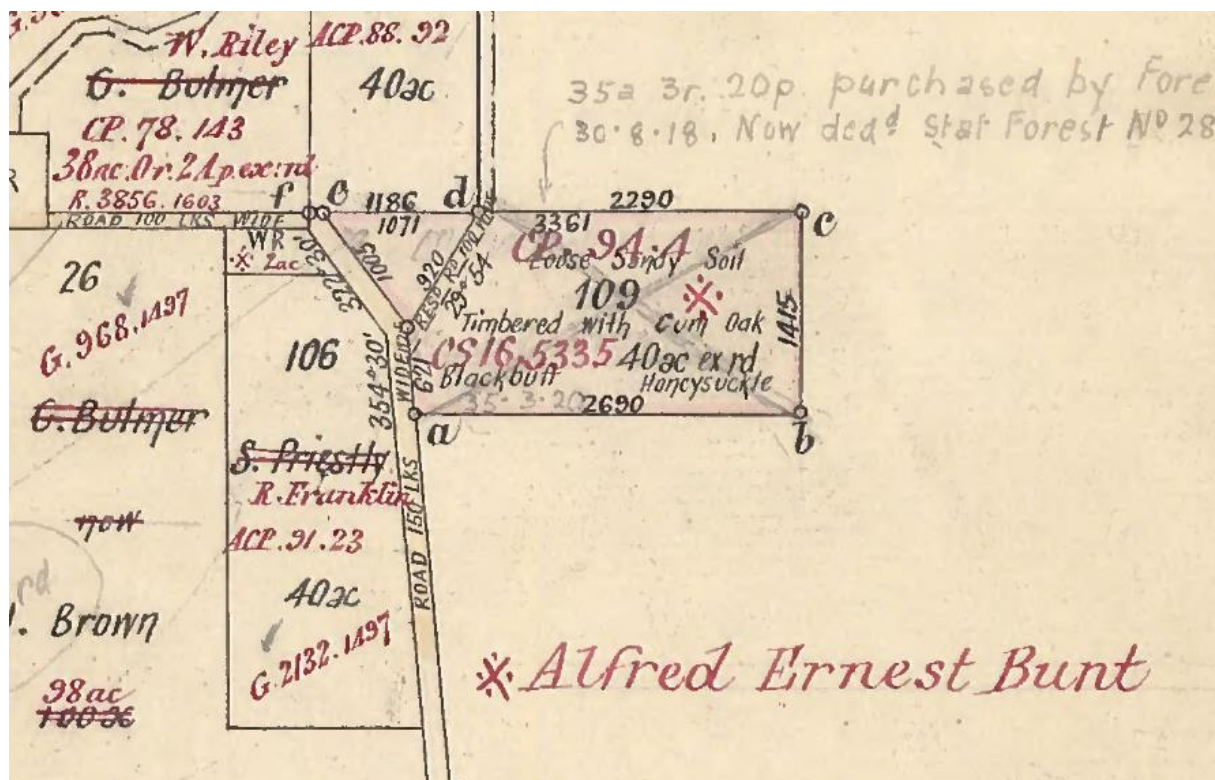


Figure 4: Extract from Crown Plan 2745-1497, dated to 1894.





Figure 6: Detail of 1921 Parish of Tuncurry plan.

4.0 STUDY AREA CONTEXT

4.1 Site Inspection

An inspection of the subject site was conducted on 21 July 2025 by Jenny Winnett of Artefact Heritage. The inspection was undertaken on foot and a photographic record was made.

4.1.1 Context

The Site is approximately 3km north of the Tuncurry township. The surrounding area is characterised by rural residential dwellings and Nine Mile Beach. The Wallamba River is approximately 1km west.

Midge Orchid Rd is used as the access for the Tuncurry Waste Management Centre and Hallidays Point Sewerage Treatment Works. The proposed development would be an extension of the services offered by the Tuncurry Waste Management Centre, located on the opposite side of the road, to the east.

A Council owned residence is located immediately west of the proposed facility.

The study area is dominated by scrubby native re-growth consisting predominantly of Acacia, Eucalyptus and Leptospermum varieties with an undergrowth of bracken fern and grasses. See Figure 7 to Figure 12.

Areas cleared of vegetation were located adjacent to fencelines, below the existing power lines and along the central access track.

The location of the *Former Darawank Public School* was also surveyed to confirm the lack of visual connection between the heritage item and the study area. See Figure 13.

No potential heritage or archaeological items were identified during the site inspection.



Figure 7: Midge Orchid Road, views to the west



Figure 8: Midge Orchid around adjacent to study area, view to the west



Figure 9: Internal access road, view east



Figure 10: Example of re-growth vegetation)



Figure 11: North-west corner of study area, clearing adjacent to fencelines



Figure 12: Clearance below power lines

4.1.1.1 Former Darawank Public School

The site of the former Public School is located off Manns Road, on the Wallamba River, approximately 800m to the west of the study area

The converted schoolhouse itself was not visible due to landscaping. The area is dominated by mature vegetation and The Lakes Way and there are no view lines between the study area and the heritage item. See Figure 13 and Figure 14.



Figure 13: View of roofline of heritage item from Manns Road, view to the south



Figure 14: View to the east, towards study area, from Manns Road

4.2 Assessment of Historical Archaeological Potential

The potential for the survival of archaeological remains is significantly affected by development activities that required ground disturbance. This assessment is therefore based on consideration of current ground conditions, and analysis of the historical development of the study area.

'Archaeological potential' refers to the likelihood that an area contains physical remains associated with an earlier phase of occupation, activity or development of that area. This is distinct from 'archaeological significance' and 'archaeological research potential'. These designations refer to the cultural value of potential archaeological remains and are the primary basis of the recommended management actions included in this document.

The archaeological potential of a site is presented in terms of the likelihood of the presence of archaeological remains, considering the land use history and previous impacts at the site. This evaluation is presented using the following grades of archaeological potential (Table 1):

Table 1: Grading of archaeological potential

Grade	Definition
High	Evidence of multiple phases of historical development and structures with minimal or localised twentieth century development impacts, and it is likely the archaeological resource would be largely intact
Moderate	Analysis demonstrates known historical development and some previous impacts, but it is likely that archaeological remains survive with some localised truncation and disturbance
Low	Research indicates little historical development, or where there have been substantial previous disturbance and/or truncation which may not have removed deep subsurface features entirely
Nil	No evidence of historical development or use, or where previous impacts would have removed all archaeological evidence

4.2.1 Land-use summary

The following summarises the known land-use of the study area:

- Phase 1 1884 - early 20th century (private freehold): Purchased by Samuel Brown (son of James Brown of the Wallamba River holdings). The land was described in 1894 as loose sandy soil timbered with oak, blackbutt, gum and honeysuckle. Brown is recorded as residing and working in Tuncurry township (Wrights timber mill fireman/engine driver) rather than on the subject land
- Phase 2 Early 20th century ownership: Later owned by Alfred Ernest Bunt, a teamster who reportedly moved to the district only in the early 1930s - again suggesting no residence on the subject land
- Phase 3: Regional character in early 1900s: The wider area was reported as "waste land... sand dunes... covered in stunted valueless trees and bracken fern.' The Reafforestation Prison Camp (from 1913) was established to the north-east and did not include the study area
- Phase 4: 1918 present (Crown/forestry): The land was purchased by the Forest Department and gazetted Tuncurry State Forest No. 283 (1918), with subsequent forestry management activities probable (track formation, selective logging/thinning, fire management).

4.2.2 Known disturbance

The following factors have been considered in the preparation of this assessment:

- Clearing and later forestry management (track construction/maintenance, plant operations, firebreaks, possible borrow and drainage works) likely disturbed or removed shallow historic deposits
- Sandy, mobile substrates have low preservation potential for fragile features; shallow artefact scatters are readily dispersed/buried
- Young vegetation and regrowth indicates relatively recent disturbance, further reducing likelihood of intact 19th-early 20th century deposits
- No visible structural platforms, fencing alignments, domestic refuse or industrial fixtures were identified during inspection.

4.2.3 Archaeological potential

The study area has nil historical archaeological potential. Any historical material likely to occur would be sparse, disturbed and of low interpretive value, most plausibly limited to forestry-related works from the 20th century. Intact domestic, industrial or agricultural deposits of the late 19th - early 20th century are not anticipated.

The above factors indicate that the study area has the potential to contain the following:

Table 2: Summary of archaeological potential

Phase/Use	Archaeological resource	Potential
1884–c.1918 (private, non-residential)	Occasional boundary fencing evidence; informal tracks; sparse lost/discarded items	Nil
1918–present (State Forest)	Forestry tracks, minor culverts/drains, sporadic hardware; modern disturbance	Likely to be extant / not archaeological

5.0 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

5.1 Methodology

Determining the significance of heritage items or a potential archaeological resource is undertaken by utilising a system of assessment centred on the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 2013). The principles of the charter are relevant to the assessment, conservation and management of sites and relics. The assessment of heritage significance is outlined through legislation in the *Heritage Act* and implemented through the *NSW Heritage Manual*, the *Archaeological Assessment Guidelines*³⁹ and the document *Assessing Significance for Historical Archaeological Sites and 'Relics'*.⁴⁰

If an item meets one of the seven heritage criteria and retains the integrity of its key attributes, it can be considered to have heritage significance (see Table 3). The significance of an item or potential archaeological site can then be assessed as being of local or State significance. If a potential archaeological resource does not reach the local or state significance threshold, then it is not classified as a relic under the *Heritage Act*.

'*State heritage significance*', in relation to a place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct, means significance to the State in relation to the historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic value of the item.

'*Local heritage significance*', in relation to a place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct, means significance to an area in relation to the historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic value of the item.⁴¹

Table 3. NSW heritage assessment criteria

Criteria	Description
A – Historical Significance	An item is important in the course or pattern of the local area's cultural or natural history.
B – Associative Significance	An item has strong or special associations with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the local area's cultural or natural history.
C – Aesthetic or Technical Significance	An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in the local area.
D – Social Significance	An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in the local area for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.
E – Research Potential	An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the local area's cultural or natural history.
F – Rarity	An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the local area's cultural or natural history.
G - Representativeness	An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places of cultural or natural environments (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

³⁹ NSW Heritage Office 1996, 25-27.

⁴⁰ NSW Heritage Branch 2009.

⁴¹ This section is an extract based on the Heritage Office Assessing Significance for Historical Archaeological Sites and Relics 2009:6.

5.2 The study area

5.2.1 Significance assessment

The table below contains a significance assessment for the study area.

Table 4. Heritage significance assessment for the study area

Criteria	Discussion
A) Historical Significance	The site formed part of late 19th–early 20th century holdings later incorporated into Tuncurry State Forest No. 283 (1918). Historic descriptions emphasise poor soils, timbered dunes and subsequent forestry -land uses common across the district. No evidence of on-site residence, farming improvements, or industrial development has been identified; the area appears to have been cleared and subsequently disturbed by forestry activities. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (a).
B) Associative Significance	Although linked in title to Samuel Brown and later Alfred Ernest Bunt, the available evidence indicates no strong or demonstrable on-site association (both are recorded as resident/active in Tuncurry rather than on the land). No fabric survives that would illustrate a direct, special association. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (b).
C) Aesthetic Significance	The place presents ordinary scenic amenity characteristic of regrowth forest on sandy substrates. It lacks designed landscape qualities, landmark views, or notable technical/creative works (no structures, constructed lookouts, designed plantings, or engineering). Some mature eucalypts are present but are few and, in the context of a previously cleared and disturbed setting, make only a minor contribution to local character. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (c).
D) Social Significance	No indications of specific community attachment, commemoration, or shared social value were identified for the study area (non-Indigenous perspective). No evidence of use or traditions that would confer recognised community significance. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (d). (Note: Aboriginal cultural values require separate assessment under the relevant frameworks and consultation processes.)
E) Research Potential	Given the cleared and disturbed condition, absence of built fabric and non-residential history, the site has low potential to yield important information about NSW or local history beyond what is already known from documentary sources (forestry/regrowth land use). Any subsurface historical evidence is likely to be sparse, disturbed, and of low interpretive value. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (e).
F) Rarity	The study area reflects common regional patterns. No rare cultural landscape features, uncommon structures, or exceptional natural attributes (from a heritage perspective) have been identified. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (f).
G) Representativeness	The place is typical of disturbed regrowth forest parcels in the district. However, representativeness alone does not confer significance; and given the low integrity, the site does not sufficiently demonstrate principal characteristics of a valued historical class. Does not reach the threshold for local or State significance under (g).

5.2.2 Statement of Significance

The study area is a previously cleared, disturbed regrowth parcel with no identified historic built fabric, minimal aesthetic value, no demonstrated associative or social values, and low research potential. On current evidence, it does not meet the threshold for listing or recognition at local or State level against NSW Heritage Criteria (a) - (g).

5.2.3 Archaeological remains

Any isolated forestry or boundary features, if present, are expected to be common, low-integrity and of low research value.

Based on the evidence currently available, the study area's historical archaeological resource would not be expected to contribute substantially to broader research questions. Given the lack of residential/industrial occupation, poor agricultural suitability, and subsequent forestry disturbance, surviving historical remains (if any) are unlikely to meet the threshold for local significance or be considered "relics" under the NSW *Heritage Act 1977*.

5.3 Nearest heritage item – former Darawank Public School

5.3.1 Significance assessment

The table below contains a significance assessment for the study area, extracted from the SHI.⁴²

Table 5. Heritage significance assessment for the study area

Criteria	Discussion
A) Historical Significance	The former Darawank public school records past educational methods, transport means and past demographic trends when small country localities could justify and support their own local small school. A period of expansion and reform in New South Wales education was introduced by the passing of the Public Instruction Act in 1880. Development was stifled by the 1890s depression but again became a major issue after 1900. Darawank school, being of brick construction, might have been a late example of the initial expansion of the education system before the hard times of the early 1890s depression finally halted work.
B) Associative Significance	-
C) Aesthetic Significance	The school is a particularly pleasing, if humble, example of late 19th century administrative/functional buildings.
D) Social Significance	-
E) Research Potential	The question is , why was it a brick school? The above comments in Historical Significance may be the answer.
F) Rarity	The former Darawank school, as a brick building, is rare in the region.
G) Representativeness	The former school may be representative of pre 18890s depression schools construction or may be the result of a local builder giving a persuasive price quotation.

⁴² State Heritage Inventory, *Former Darawank Public School*, accessed 3 Aug 2025, URL: <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/View/Item?itemId=1650020>

5.3.2 Statement of Significance

The Darawank school records past educational methods, transport means and past demographic trends when small country localities could justify and support their own local small school. The school is in basically original condition despite its disuse and is a rare example, by timber rich North Coast standards, of a small local school of brick construction. Only two other local examples are noted; the first Wards River school which ceased use in 1919 in favour of a new timber building and the former Glenthorne school near Taree.

6.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Overview

This section assesses the heritage impact of the proposed works at the study area on heritage values within the study area. Justifications are also provided for the proposed works.

Within this approach, the objective of a heritage impact assessment is to evaluate and explain how the proposed works will affect the heritage value of the study area and/or place. A heritage impact assessment should also address how the heritage value of the site/place can be conserved or maintained, or preferably enhanced by the proposed works.

In order to consistently identify the impact of the proposed works, the terminology contained in the following table has been referenced throughout this document. This terminology and corresponding definitions are based on those contained within the guidelines produced by ICOMOS (2011), as seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Terminology for assessing the magnitude of heritage impact

Grading	Definition
Major adverse	Actions that would have a severe, long-term and possibly irreversible impact on a heritage item. Actions in this category would include partial or complete demolition of a heritage item or addition of new structures in its vicinity that destroy the visual setting of the item. These actions cannot be fully mitigated.
Moderate adverse	Actions that would have an adverse impact on a heritage item. Actions in this category would include removal of an important part of a heritage item's setting or temporary removal of significant elements or fabric. The impact of these actions could be reduced through appropriate mitigation measures.
Minor adverse	Actions that would have a minor adverse impact on a heritage item. This may be the result of the action affecting only a small part of the place or a distant/small part of the setting of a heritage place. The action may also be temporary and/or reversible.
Negligible	Actions that are so minor that the heritage impact is considered negligible.
Neutral	Actions that would have no heritage impact.
Minor positive	Actions that would bring a minor benefit to a heritage item, such as an improvement in the item's visual setting.
Moderate positive	Actions that would bring a moderate benefit to a heritage item, such as removal of intrusive elements or fabric or a substantial improvement to the item's visual setting.
Major positive	Actions that would bring a major benefit to a heritage item, such as reconstruction of significant fabric, removal of substantial intrusive elements/fabric or reinstatement of an item's visual setting or curtilage.

Table 7: Terminology for heritage impact types

Impact	Definition
Direct	Impacts resulting from works located within the curtilage boundaries of the heritage item.
Potential direct	Impacts resulting from increased noise, vibrations and construction works located outside the curtilage boundaries of the heritage item.
Indirect	Impact to views, vistas and setting of the heritage item resulting from proposed works outside the curtilage boundaries of the heritage item.
Archaeological	Impacts to potential archaeological remains located within the curtilage boundaries of the heritage item.

6.2 Works summary

The MidCoast Regional Organics Processing Solution (MC ROPS) would be a fully enclosed FOGO facility utilising In-Vessel Composting (IVC) and Dry Anaerobic Digestion (AD) technology to process organic waste and produce high-quality compost end products. The facility would be comprised of a receival building, pre-treatment and contamination management, IVC tunnels with enclosed maturation, digester and biogas equipment, and air treatment system including biofilter and scrubbers to process contracted MidCoast Council waste. The proposed operational capacity is 146,000tpa, providing the capacity to process both MidCoast Council FOGO, self-haul material and additional organics sourced from commercial and industrial arisings (see Figure 15 for layout, with designs included in Appendix A).

Proposed works include:

- Site preparation
- Earthworks
- Road pavements
- Landscaping and screening
- Weighbridge installation
- Stormwater and drainage services
- Sewer works
- Potable water supply
- Waste water system
- Electrical and communication
- Provision of fire services
- Construction and fit out of receival building
- Construction and fit out of in vessel compost (IVC) tunnels
- Construction and fit out of dry anerobic digestion equipment
- Construction and fit out of semi-enclosed aerated maturation area
- Construction and fit out of air handling system, including odour control Provision of a leachate management system
- Provision of compost process control system.

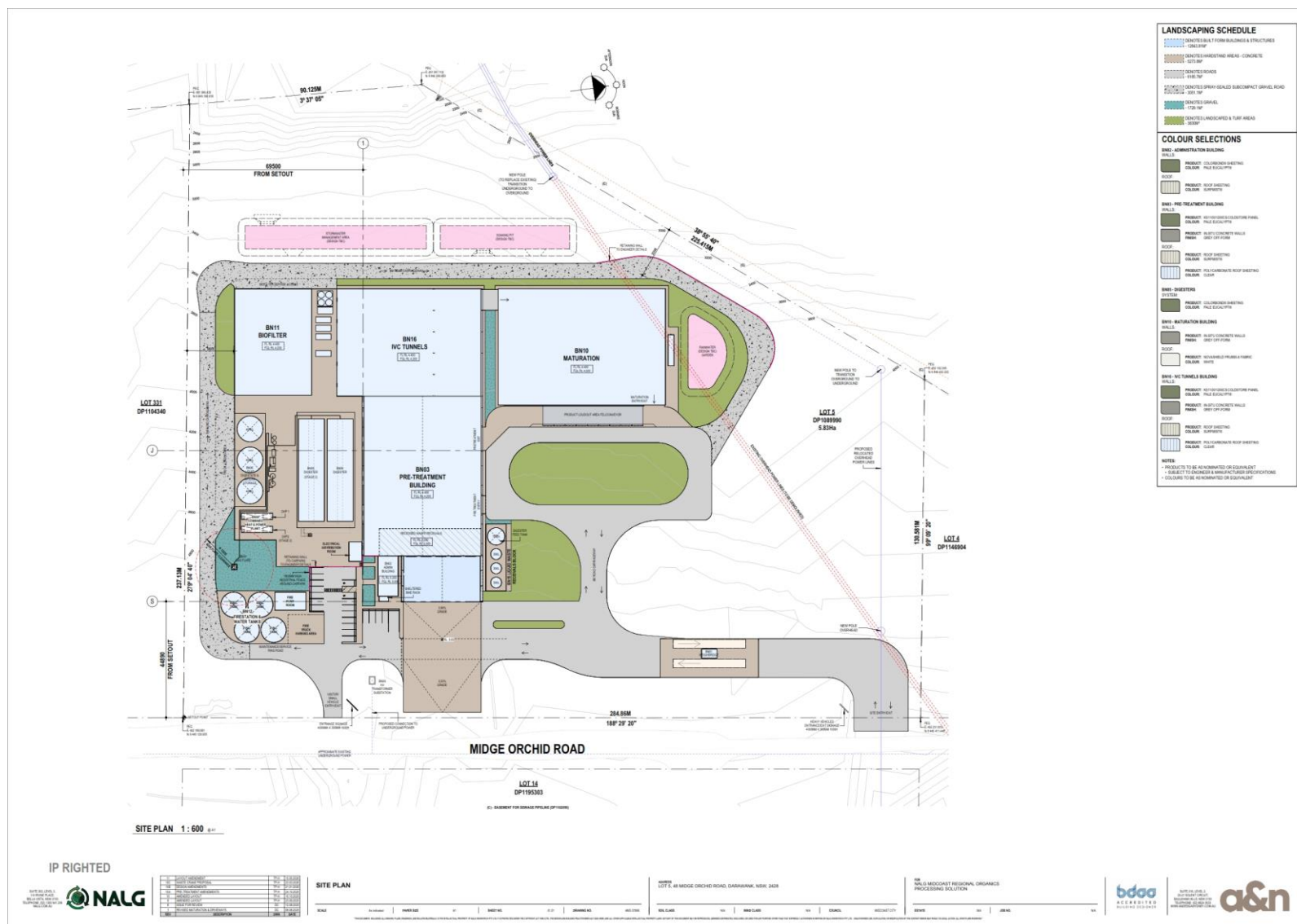


Figure 15: Proposed site layout. Source: NALG

6.3 Heritage Impact Assessment

The objective of the following impact assessment is to assess the potential impacts of the proposed facility on the heritage values of the area.

6.3.1 The study area

The proposal would result in clearance and disturbance across the entire study area.

However, as the study area does not represent or possess historical cultural heritage values, as assessed under the NSW Heritage Criteria and as the study area does not have historical archaeological potential, the proposed works would result in neutral direct impact to heritage

The removal of vegetation across the site would result in a change to the visual setting in the immediate vicinity. However, no view lines to listed heritage items would be affected. The proposal would not be visible from the nearest heritage item, the Former Darawank Public School. Changes to the setting are consistent with the current industrial use of the study area. The proposed works would result in neutral indirect (visual) impact to heritage values.

6.3.2 Former Darawank Public School

The heritage item is approximately 800m west of the study area. There would be no physical impacts to the item through vibration during construction or operation due to this distance. There is no visual connection between the study area and the heritage item. The proposed works would result in neutral impact to the listed heritage values of the Former Darawank Public School.

6.3.3 Statement of Heritage Impact

A statement of heritage impact has been prepared according to NSW Heritage Office guidelines in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Preliminary Statement of Heritage Impact for the proposed rehabilitation works

Development	Discussion
What aspects of the Proposal respect or enhance the heritage significance of the study area?	The study area has no identified historical heritage values under NSW Criteria and no historical archaeological potential. The proposed works would therefore result in neutral direct impact. Visual change from vegetation clearance is confined to the immediate setting and does not affect view lines to listed items; the Proposal is not visible from the nearest heritage item (Former Darawank Public School, ~800 m west). The industrial character of the locality means the proposal is consistent with existing setting, yielding neutral indirect (visual) impact.
What aspects of the Proposal could have a detrimental impact on the heritage significance of the study area?	No aspects of the proposal are expected to have a detrimental impact on heritage significance.
Have more sympathetic options been considered and discounted?	Alternative siting/footprint changes to avoid heritage are unnecessary on heritage grounds given the absence of heritage values and no visibility to nearby listed items.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

This report has made the following conclusions:

- The study area is not listed on any heritage registers
- The nearest listed heritage item is approximately 800m to the west – the *Former Darawank Public School* (Schedule 5 of the Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2014 as Item I19)
- The study area is unlikely to contain a significant historical archaeological resource or archaeological relics as protected by the NSW *Heritage Act 1977*
- The proposal is considered to be acceptable from a historical heritage perspective and will not result in adverse impacts to heritage values or items.

7.2 Recommendations

- An Unexpected Finds Procedure should be implemented for all excavation works. Should unexpected 'relics' be discovered during works Heritage NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet (delegate of the NSW Heritage Office) is to be notified of the discovery of any unexpected relics in accordance with Section 146 of the NSW *Heritage Act 1977*. Depending on the nature of the discovery, additional assessment and possibly an excavation permit may be required prior to the recommencement of excavation in the affected area.

8.0 REFERENCES

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9.0 APPENDIX A – FINAL DESIGN DRAWINGS



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