

Aboriginal Heritage Assessment
Discovery Point Precinct
Stage 6 Project Application

August 2011



Report prepared for Discovery Point Pty Ltd

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jo McDonald Cultural Heritage Management (JMcD CHM) was commissioned to produce this Heritage Impact Assessment (HIS) on behalf of 'Discovery Point' for the Discovery Point Stage 6 Project application (Figure 1 and 2). This HIS will satisfy the Director General's Requirements (DGRs) for an Environmental Assessment (EA) under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The DGRs relevant to the proposed development are;

14c - Awareness of the possible existence of any archaeological relics which may be disturbed during the works that may require an archaeological assessment to be undertaken; and

14d - The EA shall provide an Archaeological Assessment of Aboriginal and non-indigenous archaeological resources, including an assessment of the significance and potential impact on the archaeological resources.

The purpose of the HIS is to assess the impacts on Aboriginal heritage from the Stage 6 development proposal, taking into account the initial archaeological investigations of the study area and management recommendations made in relation to the previous Masterplan (JMcD CHM 2000, 2005a, 2006) and more recently the concept plan (JMcD CHM 2010). This report should be read in conjunction with these earlier reports, as the background information and detailed investigation results are not repeated here.

Figure 1: Study area in its local context (circled in red). Background image from GoogleEarth.



1.1 Summary of recommendations

These recommendations are based on previous archaeological studies, the current assessment of archaeological potential, the interests of the Aboriginal community, and legislative requirements relating to the proposed Stage 6 development proposal under this Part 3A application.

It is recommended that:

1. Pockets of intact Aboriginal archaeological deposit (part of registered site AHIMS #45-6-2737) are likely to exist within the Zone 2 (moderate archaeological potential) sections of the Stage 6 development area;
2. Further archaeological investigation is required in the Zone 2 area of the Stage 6 development area (Figure 5). This part of the Precinct has not been investigated previously. Prior to commencement of construction works in this area a test excavation programme should be carried out to ascertain whether intact archaeological material is present here;
3. Zone 3 areas (low archaeological potential) and Zone 4 areas (no archaeological potential) do not require further archaeological work. These areas are considered developable without constraint.

1.2 Report authorship

This report was written by Jo McDonald.

2. ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The study area falls within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC). The MLALC has been consulted during all previous investigations of Aboriginal heritage in the study area, and during the applications for s87 and s90 permits for excavation works. Copies of these previous Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permits were lodged with Mr Allan Madden (Cultural Heritage Officer, MLALC). Members of MLALC participated in the original survey, and in both excavation programmes. MLALC was given the opportunity to provide comments on the cultural and Aboriginal heritage of the study area. Copies of all previous reports, including the Heritage Assessment prepared for the Concept Plan application, have been forwarded to MLALC for their comments.

3. THE STUDY AREA

The Discovery Point precinct is bounded by the Cooks River, the Princes Highway, Magdalene Terrace, Brodie Spark Drive and the Illawarra railway line. It is located immediately south of the Cooks River and about 400m south of the river's junction with Wolli Creek. The Cooks River enters Botany Bay approximately 3km southeast of

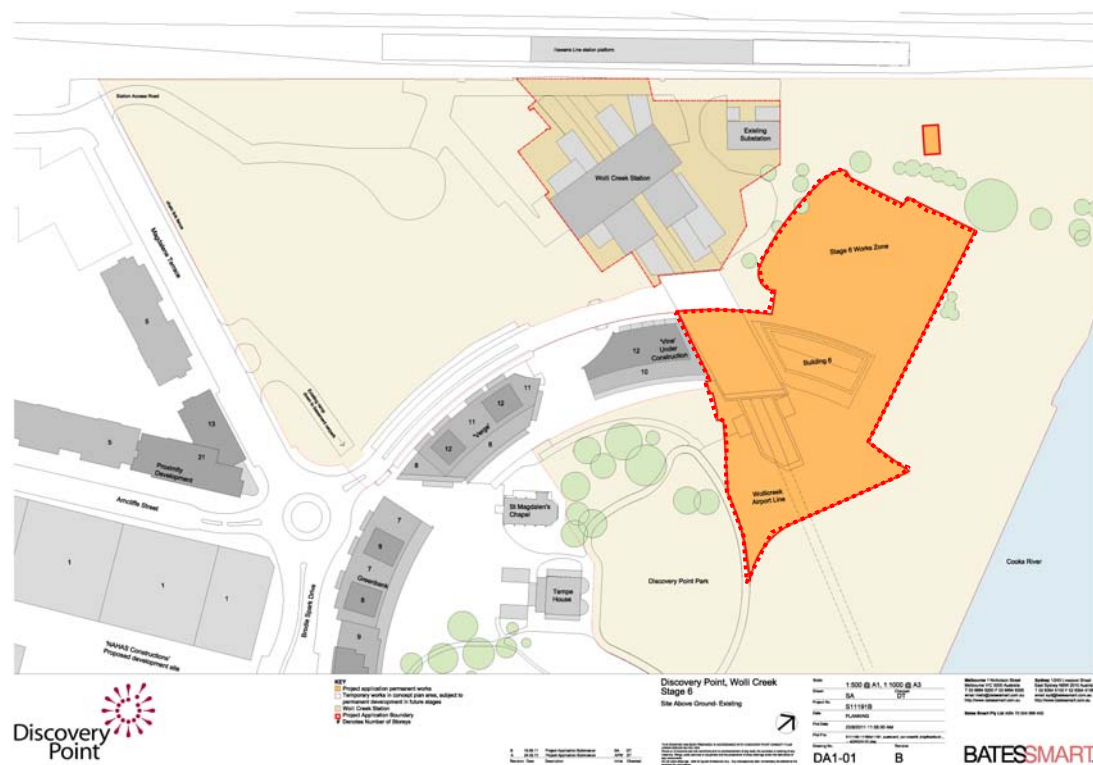
the study area. The current study area covered by this HIS excludes the southern area of the precinct around Tempe House, as shown in Figure 2 (study area shaded in pink).

The Discovery Point development precinct includes a portion of the State Heritage Register Conservation Precinct (Figure 4): the Stage 6 development area is partially located in this Conservation Precinct.

1.3 Proposed Development

This HIS addresses the impacts associated with the Stage 6 Project Application for the Discovery Point precinct. Some of the Discovery Point development has already been built with high rise residential blocks, a train station, restoration of the heritage listed buildings Tempe House and St Magdalen's Chapel, and landscaped parks and gardens. This HIS applies to Stage 6 of the Discovery Point precinct which includes Building 6 and a basement car park under Brodie Spark Drive and Building 11 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Discovery Point development precinct with Stage 6 project application area outlined in red.



3.2 Environmental Context

The study area is located on Quaternary alluvium adjacent to the Cooks River estuary. The local soils are silty to peaty quartz sand with ferruginous and humic cementation in places over Hawkesbury sandstone (JMcD CHM 2006: Appendix 2). Shell layers are common within the soil profile.

Within the Discovery Point Precinct is a sandstone outcrop known as Mount Olympus. The high point of this feature is close to the Princes Highway, and slopes away to the north and west. A detailed discussion of the geomorphology and environmental context of the study area can be found in JMcD CHM 2006: Appendix 2.

3.3 Land-use impact assessment

The Discovery Point site has experienced periods of considerable disturbance during its 150+ years of European occupation. The landscape of the Discovery Point site and its surrounds has been highly modified by the construction of various buildings and then during the initial development of the Discovery Point Precinct and the Wolli Creek railway station.

The riverfront has been modified as land has been reclaimed and filled. The northern most section of the study area has been reclaimed, with the original river bank bending around under the railway line to the west of its current position. The south eastern portion of the Discovery Point precinct is also reclaimed land. The river bank has also been modified through infilling of dredge deposit from the Cooks River, and construction fill.

The disturbance across the study area has been documented previously (Coffey Geosciences 2003) and based on this and previous archaeological excavations archaeological zoning map has been developed which identifies those areas of the development precinct which still retain the potential to contain intact archaeological deposit

There are no areas within the Stage 6 development area (Figure 3) likely to contain undisturbed sand deposit with archaeological material. Geotechnical and previous archaeological excavations here in 2004 demonstrated that high levels of disturbance.

4. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES AT DISCOVERY POINT

Several studies of Aboriginal heritage have been conducted within the Discovery Point development precinct (JMcD CHM 2000, 2005a, 2006). These reports describe in detail the local and regional archaeological contexts. The locations where the previous work was completed are shown (Figure 4).

This previous work has demonstrated that some significant remnant intact archaeological deposit occurs within the development precinct. There is a registered Aboriginal archaeological site (AHIMS #45-6-2737) within the Discovery Point site: this remains in the SHR Conservation Precinct and in other defined areas (see below).

Part of this site has been dated to 10,700 BP (years before present). This is the earliest date for an occupation site in the eastern coastal strip of the Sydney Basin (JMcD CHM 2005a).

Figure 3: Assessed disturbance zones based on the geotechnical report (Coffey 2003) and previous archaeological excavations. The Stage 6 development area is outlined in red. Note the orientation of this figure is different to Figure 2)

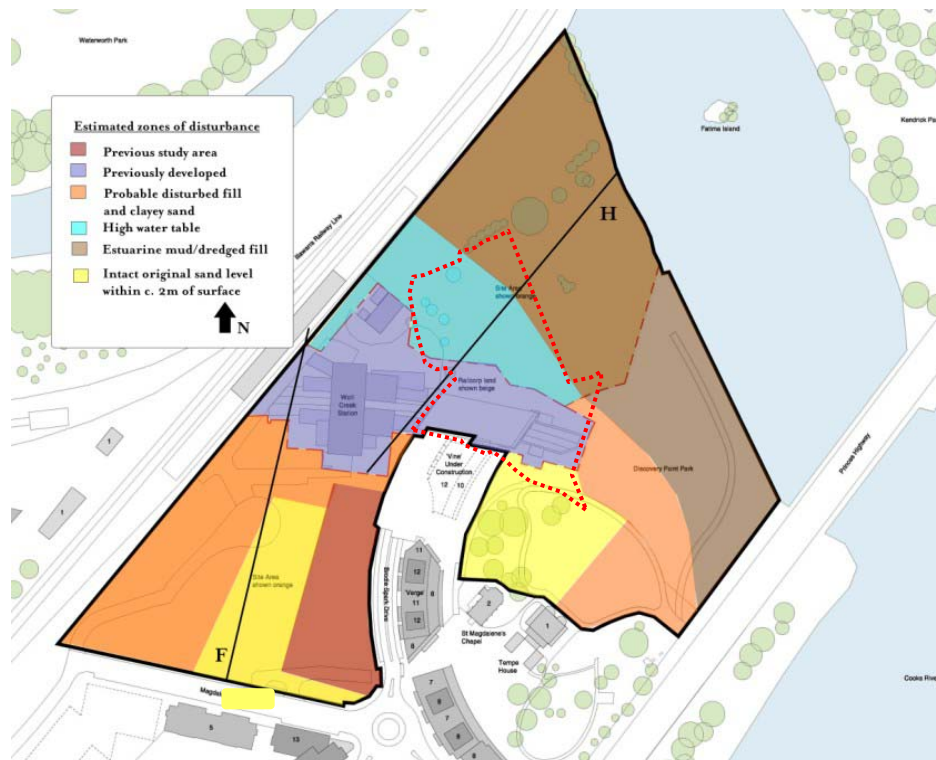
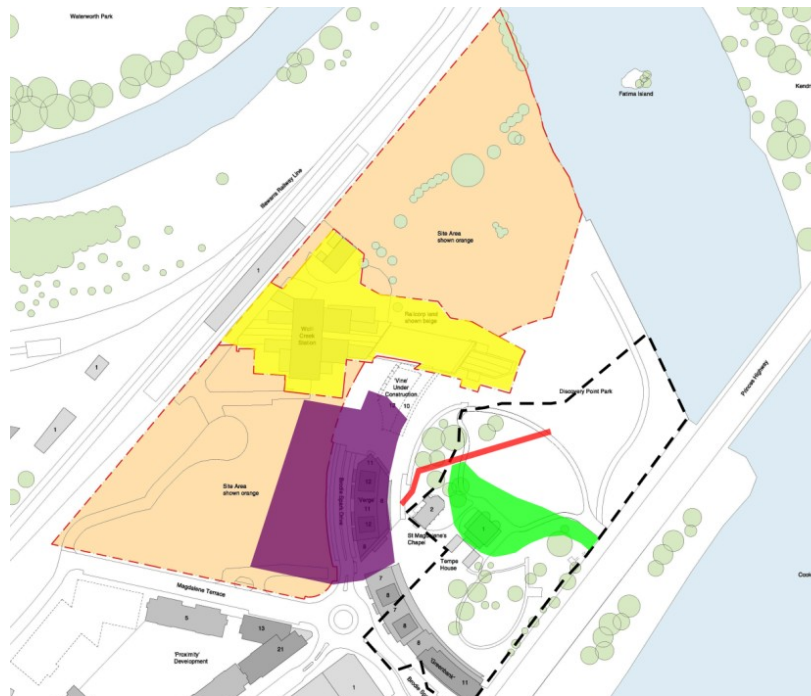


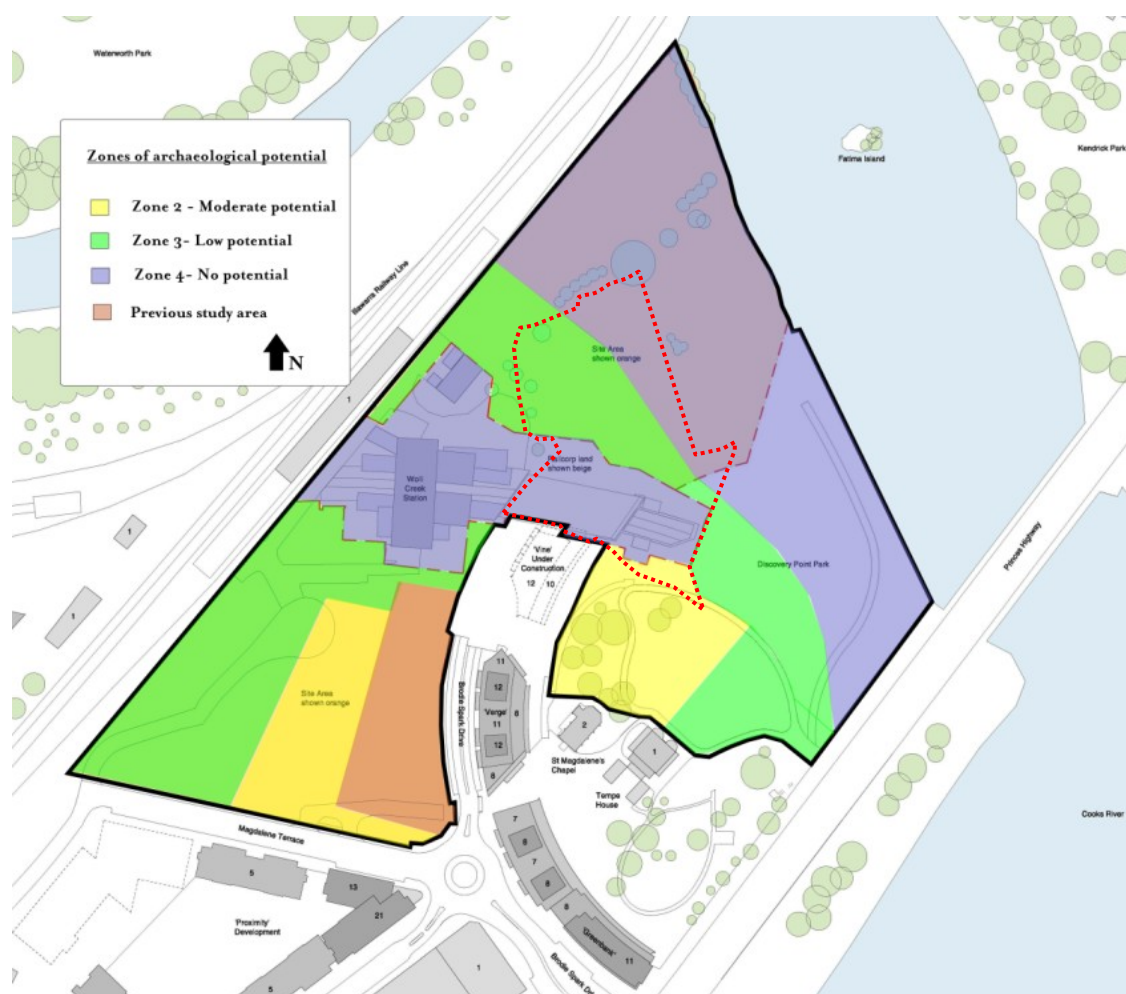
Figure 4: Locations of previous study areas: 1997 (yellow), 2004 (purple), SWC (red), SHR (green). The SHR boundary is indicated by the dashed black line.



5. INDIGENOUS HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The highly disturbed nature of the Discovery Point development makes it difficult to predict precisely the location of further pockets of remnant intact archaeological deposit. Previous work has demonstrated that these isolated pockets do exist in parts of the site even when it is expected that they would have been destroyed by previous land use impacts (JMcD CHM 2005a, 2006). Based on the examination of geotechnical results, the results of previous Aboriginal and non-Indigenous archaeological excavations, and the known history of site impacts, Discovery Point has been divided into zones of archaeological sensitivity/potential (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Zones of archaeological potential. Location of Stage 6 project area outlined in red.



In order to appropriately manage the Aboriginal heritage values, it is necessary to assess the area's archaeological sensitivity and/or potential. This assessment includes the identification of lands with the greatest potential to contain intact archaeological deposit (i.e. only minimally disturbed by previous land use impact).

Four zones of archaeological potential are commonly identified for this purpose. These zones are used to assist in the assessment of the sites and landscapes within the study area. No Zone I areas are located within the current study area.

- ☉ Zone 1 – High archaeological potential
- ☉ Zone 2 – Moderate archaeological potential
- ☉ Zone 3 – Low archaeological potential
- ☉ Zone 4 – No archaeological potential

The Stage 6 development proposal will impact on a small area of Zone 2 (moderate archaeological potential) but for the main part is Zone 3 (with low archaeological potential) and mostly Zone 4 (with no archaeological potential).

Geotechnical cores drilled in 2003 (outside the Stage 6 application area) show that remnant archaeological deposit may exist from 1-2 metres below the current ground surface, especially in the Zone 2 area. As the core placement distribution was not intensive, it is difficult to accurately estimate the nature and extent of remaining archaeological deposit. Some localised disturbance has occurred in this area (such as the laying of cables, construction of temporary site structures and construction material storage) but pockets of undisturbed deposit are likely to remain.

6. DISCUSSION

Previous archaeological investigations have demonstrated that pockets of remnant archaeological deposit exist amongst the disturbed areas across the Discovery Point precinct.

Highly significant archaeological information has been recovered from the site, including an occupation date of 10,700 years ago, one of the oldest dates so far recorded in this part of the Sydney region. The site also represents a rare example of Aboriginal occupation in an estuarine landscape throughout the Holocene. Occupation has been demonstrated by the recovery of an assemblage of cultural lithics and evidence of resource use, such as shell fish.

1.4 Assessment of Heritage Significance

The appropriate management of cultural heritage items is usually determined on the basis of their assessed significance as well as the likely impact of the proposed development. Scientific, cultural and public/education significance are currently identified as baseline elements of this assessment, and it is through the combination of these elements that the overall cultural heritage values of a site, place or area are resolved.

Cultural significance

This type of assessment indicates the importance of a site, place or feature to the relevant cultural group – in this case the Aboriginal community. Aspects of cultural significance include assessment of sites, items, and landscapes that are traditionally significant or that have contemporary importance to the Aboriginal community. This importance involves both traditional links with specific areas as well as an overall concern by Aboriginal people for their sites generally and the continued protection of

these. This type of significance may not be in accord with interpretations made by the archaeologist - a site may have low scientific significance but high Aboriginal significance (or *vice versa*). The cultural significance of the site will be addressed by the Metropolitan LALC.

Scientific significance

Assessing a site in this context involves placing it into a broader regional framework, as well as assessing the site's individual merits in view of current archaeological discourse. This type of significance relates to the ability of a site to answer current research questions. It is also based on a site's condition (integrity), information potential and representativeness and/or rarity (see above).

The scientific significance of the open sites and PADs are generally not easily assessed based on their surface manifestations. A ranking of archaeological potential or sensitivity is made, based on land-use mapping, localised disturbance factors and the predictive model. Intact subsurface archaeological deposit exists within the Discovery Point precinct with ***high scientific potential*** to provide further information on a rare surviving example of prehistoric habitation in this coastal/estuarine landscape. Some of this sensitive landscape falls within the current Stage 6 development proposal.

Public significance

Sites that have public significance do so because they can educate people about the past. By reducing ignorance about why sites are important to the Aboriginal and scientific community, our human heritage can be protected from ignorant or inadvertent destruction. For a site to have high public significance it should contain easily identifiable and interpretable elements, and be relatively easily accessed.

The public significance of the sites/archaeological features within the Discovery Point precinct is assessed as being generally low on the basis of their poor surface manifestations. Open sites are extremely difficult to appreciate by a lay-public due to the 'invisibility' of the evidence present. The study area therefore has a ***low public significance***.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on the basis of:

- ☉ the Director General's Requirements for the Environmental Assessment of the proposed development at Discovery Point made under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979;
- ☉ the interests of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- ☉ the results of previous Aboriginal heritage investigations at Discovery Point;
- ☉ the areas of archaeological sensitivity defined by previous investigations and the likely impacts from the Stage 6 development proposal (Figure 5).

It is recommended that:

1. Pockets of intact Aboriginal archaeological deposit (part of registered site AHIMS #45-6-2737) are likely to exist within the small area of Zone 2 (moderate archaeological potential) within the Stage 6 development area;
4. Further archaeological investigation is required in the Zone 2 area of the Stage 6 development (Figure 5). This part of the Precinct has not been investigated previously. Prior to commencement of construction works in this area a test excavation programme should be carried out to ascertain whether intact archaeological material is present here;
5. Zone 3 areas (low archaeological potential) and Zone 4 areas (no archaeological potential) do not require further archaeological work. These areas are considered developable without constraint;
6. The Metropolitan LALC should be consulted in relation to this stage of the development proposal;
7. One copy of this report should be sent to:
Mr Robert Welsh
Chairperson,
Metropolitan LALC,
PO BOX 1103,
STRAWBERRY HILLS, NSW, 2770.
6. Two hard copies and one electronic copy of this report should be sent to:
Ms. Lou Ewins
Planning and Aboriginal Heritage Section,
Office of Environment and Heritage NSW,
Level 7, 79 George Street,
PARRAMATTA, NSW 2150

8. REFERENCES

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