

Leichhardt Oval Refurbishment and Upgrades

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
Assessment Report

Report to Inner West Council

November 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project overview

Artefact Heritage and Environment have been engaged by Inner West Council (the proponent) to prepare an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) for works proposed at Leichhardt Oval 68 Mary Street, Lilyfield (Lot 120 DP 1279860) (the study area). The study area is within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. The traditional landowners of the subject site are the clans or groups known as the Wangal (Wann-gal, Wanngal) and Gadigal. The proposal at Leichhardt Oval would include upgrades to the existing western grandstand and seating bowl, and a new northern grandstand, to improve amenity and accessibility, and increase the number of fixed seating (no change to overall spectator capacity).

The proposal has been declared State Significant Development (State Significant Development– 85149458) under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Item 18 of the Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements issued on 23 June 2025 outline that Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment would be required to inform the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposal.

This Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) considers the impacts of the proposal on Aboriginal cultural heritage within the study area. It is also informed by the Archaeological Technical Report previously prepared by Artefact Heritage, which is contained within Appendix A of this report (Appendix A – Archaeological Technical report).

The cultural heritage assessment includes:

- Assessment of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the study area and identification of any specific areas of cultural significance
- Assessment of archaeological potential in the study area
- The results of archaeological survey and the Aboriginal test excavation program within the study area
- Aboriginal stakeholder consultation.

Declaration		
Name	Jonny Love	
Professional Qualifications	Bachelor of Archaeology (MQ) Master of Research (MRes) (MQ)	
The undersigned declares that this ACHAR has been prepared in response to the following SEARs requirements issued for the project on 23 June 2025 for SSD-85149458:		
SEARs item	SEARs Issue and Assessment Requirements	Relevant Section of this Report that addresses SEARs Requirement
18. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	18. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Provide an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) prepared in accordance with relevant guidelines, identifying, describing and	Section 1.1 – Project brief Section 1.4 – Statutory framework

Declaration		
	assessing any impacts to any Aboriginal cultural heritage sites or values associated with the site.	
Signed		
Dated	11 November 2025	

Summary of findings

The ACHAR has made the following conclusions through a combination of desktop assessment, archaeological survey and community consultation:

- No known Aboriginal objects listed on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) are present within the study area
- No unregistered Aboriginal objects were identified within the study area, nor were any areas of potential for concealed Aboriginal objects identified within the study area
- While the study area is located within 200 m of water and within proximity to sandstone resources, extensive modification of the study area would have substantially disturbed or removed subsurface deposits
- The study area is assessed of no scientific significance and does not contain specific historical, aesthetic, socio/cultural values
- While the proposal would cause significant ground disturbance throughout the study area, there is no evidence that such works will cause harm to Aboriginal sites.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations and mitigation measures are made:

- Ongoing consultation with the RAPs would continue throughout the life of the project, if necessary. For example, ongoing consultation with RAPs would take place in the event of any unexpected Aboriginal objects being identified during the proposal
- A heritage induction including an Unexpected Finds Procedure should be prepared and all workers should be inducted prior to the commencement of works
- Where there are changes to the project area or development proposal, additional archaeological assessment may be required
- A copy of this report should be sent to the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC).

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NOTE ON LANGUAGE IN QUOTES

A number of quotes used in this report come from documents written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by European observers. They have been included because they provide information on the lives of Aboriginal people in the region, though the language used and views expressed by these writers can be offensive and distressing.

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

Aboriginal cultural heritage: The material (objects) and intangible (mythological places, dreaming stories etc) traditions and practices associated with past and present-day Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal object: Any deposit, object or material evidence (not being a handicraft made for sale), including Aboriginal remains, relating to the Aboriginal habitation of NSW.

AHIMS: Acronym for 'Aboriginal heritage information management system'. AHIMS is a register that contains information about NSW Aboriginal heritage, and it is maintained by DECCW.

Archaeology: The scientific study of human history, with focus on material remains and ethnographic evidence.

Artefact: An item of cultural material created by humans.

Easting: This is a measurement used to determine location. The easting is the x-coordinate and relates to the vertical lines on a map, which divide east to west. It increases in size when moving

Exposure: The level of ground exposure is based on the whether the landform is eroding, aggrading or stable.

Northing: This is a measurement used to determine location. The northing is the y-coordinate and relates to the horizontal lines on a map, which divide north to south. It increases in size when moving further north.

Potential Archaeological Deposit (PAD): A PAD is a location that is considered to have a potential for subsurface Aboriginal objects. This is determined from a visual inspection of the site, background research of the area and the landform's cultural importance.

Sandstone: Is a sedimentary rock formed from sand-sized grains.

Survey: In archaeological terms, this refers to walking over a surface while studying the location of artefacts and landmarks. These are then recorded and photographed.

Visibility: Refers to the degree to which the surface of the ground can be observed. This may be influenced by natural processes such as wind erosion or the character of the native vegetation, and by land use practices, such as ploughing or grading. It is generally expressed in terms of the percentage of the ground surface visible for an observer on foot.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project brief

Artefact Heritage and Environment (Artefact Heritage) have been engaged by Inner West Council (the proponent) to prepare an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) for proposed refurbishment works at Leichhardt Oval, 68 Mary Street, Lilyfield (Lot 120 DP 1279860) (the study area). The refurbishment works at Leichhardt Oval would include upgrades to the existing western grandstand and seating bowl, a new northern grandstand, and an increase in the number of fixed seating (no change to overall spectator capacity), as detailed in Section 7.1.

This ACHAR has been prepared by Artefact Heritage for the proposal which has been declared a State Significant Development (SSD–85149458) under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. The Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued on 23 June 2025 outline that Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment would be required to inform the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the development proposal. This ACHAR meets, in part, the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment requirements of Item 18 of the project SEARs:¹

Table 1: Item 18 of the project SEARs

SEAR	Documentation	Response / Location in Report
18. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage		
• Provide an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) prepared in accordance with relevant guidelines, identifying, describing and assessing any impacts to any Aboriginal cultural heritage sites or values associated with the site.	• Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report	The ACHAR and appended ATR were prepared to address the requirements of Item 18 of the SEARs.

This ACHAR was informed by the Archaeological Technical Report (ATR) previously prepared by Artefact Heritage, which is contained within Appendix A of the report (Appendix A – Archaeological Technical report).

1.2 Description of the study area

The study area is located at Leichhardt Oval, 68 Mary Street (Lot 120 DP 1279860) within the suburb of Lilyfield, NSW. Leichhardt Oval is within the Inner West Local Government Area (LGA) and the Parish of Petersham, County of Cumberland. The proposal boundary at Leichhardt Oval is approximately 25,500 square meters (m²) (2.55 hectares) of developed and landscaped land bounded by Mary Street, park facilities, and residential properties to the north, south and west, and Glover Street to the east. Leichhardt Oval is an iconic sporting venue in Sydney's Inner West.

The study area is within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC). The traditional landowners of the subject site are the clans or groups known as the Wangal (Wannagal, Wanngal) and Gadigal. The location of the study area and lot boundary is illustrated in Figure 1.

¹ NSW Government, Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements, Application number: SSD-85149458, Project name: Leichhardt Oval Refurbishment.

1.3 Aims and objectives

This ACHAR aims to identify and assess the Aboriginal heritage values of the study area through consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders and the results of the archaeological investigations undertaken.

The objectives of this report are to:

- Identify any Aboriginal cultural values in and around the study area
- Assess these cultural values, as related to the study area, through consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders
- Assess the impacts the proposed construction might have on Aboriginal cultural heritage and the potential archaeological resources within the study area
- Document the process and outcomes of consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders
- Provide a plain English summary of the results of the ATR to registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

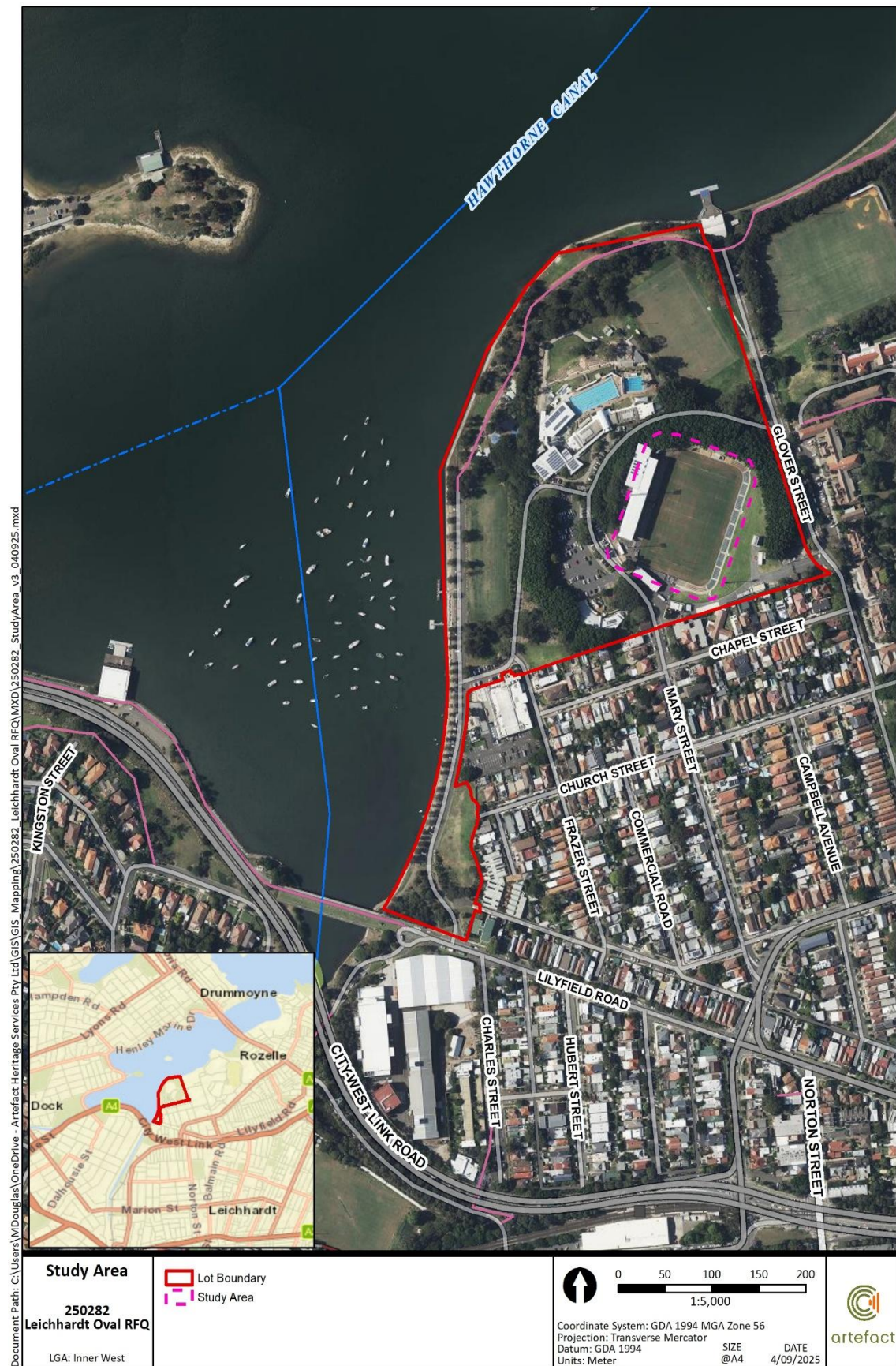
1.4 Statutory framework

This ACHAR has been prepared in accordance with the following guidelines:

- *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigations of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales* (Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water 2010b); hereafter the Code of Practice
- *Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW* (OEH 2011); hereafter the Guide
- *Aboriginal cultural heritage consultation requirements for proponents 2010* (Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water 2010a); hereafter the Consultation Requirements

The full legislative context for this assessment can be found in the ATR prepared alongside this report, which is contained within the Appendices (Appendix A – Archaeological Technical report).

Figure 1: Location of study area



2.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

2.1 Stage 1

2.1.1 Agency letters

In accordance with Section 4.1.2 of the Consultation Requirements, Artefact Heritage corresponded with the following organisations by email on 14 August 2025 requesting the details of Aboriginal people who may hold cultural knowledge relevant to determining the Aboriginal significance of Aboriginal objects and/or places within the local area:

- Heritage NSW
- Native Title Service Corporation (NTSCorp)
- National Native Title Tribunal
- Office of the Registrar, Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983
- Inner West Council
- Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services.

The due date for responses was 28 August 2025.

2.1.2 Advertisement

In accordance with Step 4.1.3 of the consultation requirements, an online advertisement was published on 29 August 2025 with News Concierge. The advertisement invited all Aboriginal persons and organisations who hold cultural knowledge relevant to determining the significance of Aboriginal objects and places in the study area to register their interest by 12 September 2025.

2.1.3 Registration of Aboriginal parties

In accordance with Section 4.1.3 of the Consultation Requirements, letters/emails were sent on 29 August 2025 to all Aboriginal persons or organisations identified through responses from agencies contacted. The letters provided details about the location and nature of the proposal and an invitation to register as an Aboriginal stakeholder. The registration of interest for the project was due 12 September 2025.

A total of ten groups were registered for the project including the Metropolitan LALC, who were automatically registered for consultation and have been consulted with at all stages of the project. Amanda Hickey (Amanda Hickey Cultural Services) registered on 18 September 2025 after the ROI due date which was 12 September 2025. As a result, the ACHAR assessment methodology letter was sent to Amanda Hickey on 10 October 2025 with the draft ACHAR requesting comment (see Section 2.3.1 and Section 2.4).

The list of the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: List of registered stakeholders

Group	Name
Ngambaa Cultural Connections	Kaarina Slater
Didge Ngunawal Clan	Lilly Carroll
Long Gully Cultural Services	Ethan Trewlynn
Thomas Dahlstrom or Kahliyrh Bell	Thomas Dahlstrom
A1 Indigenous Services	Carolyn Hickey
Kamilaroi Yankuntjatjara Working Group	Phil Khan
Wori Woilywa	Katrina Chalker
Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation	Jenny Beale
Amanda Hickey Cultural Services	Amanda Hickey
Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council	Nathan Moran

2.2 Stage 2

Stage 2 of the Consultation Requirements is to provide RAPs with information regarding the scope of the proposed project and the proposed cultural heritage assessment process. To satisfy Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the Consultation Requirements, an ACHAR methodology was prepared that included relevant information and the details are outlined in Section 2.3.

2.3 Stage 3

2.3.1 ACHAR assessment methodology

A copy of the proposed assessment methodology was sent to the RAPs by Email on 12 September 2025, requesting feedback by 10 October 2025. The draft assessment methodology presented information about the project and invited feedback on the cultural significance of the area.

Amanda Hickey (Amanda Hickey Cultural Services) was sent the ACHAR assessment methodology letter with the draft ACHAR due to a late registration (see Section 2.4).

A summary of the comments received by Artefact Heritage is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Aboriginal stakeholder comments on the Assessment Methodology

Person / RAP group	Comment	Response
Lilly Carroll and Paul Boyd (Didge Ngunawal Clan)	Noted that they were previously involved in the Concord Oval excavations and commented that many artefacts were found. Highlighted the relevance of the Concord Oval investigations to the current Leichhardt Oval assessment. Happy with the methodology overall.	Replied that the Concord Oval excavations have been incorporated into the ACHAR and ATR assessment and that further discussion would be

Person / RAP group	Comment	Response
		provided with future versions of the ACHAR and ATR for Leichhardt Oval. This change is reflected in the ACHAR and ATR for this project.
Carolyn Hickey (A1 Indigenous Services)	Supports information and methodology.	Acknowledged via email and included in ACHAR and log.
Thomas Dahlstrom (Thomas Dahlstrom and Kahliyrh Bell)	Expressed interest in the project.	Acknowledged via email and included in ACHAR and log. Comments on the methodology were welcomed.
Phil Khan (Kamilaroi Yankuntjatjara Working Group)	Commented that the significance and sensitivity of the area is recognised by Aboriginal people. Noted that Lilyfield is the traditional land of Gadigal people. Stated that the local area, particularly the foreshores, would have been used for fishing, hunting, ceremonies and potentially burials. Recommended further investigation or site survey.	Acknowledged comments on significance via email and replied that the ATR assessment has identified extensive landscape modification in the study area and has not recommended test excavation. Noted that all assessment information is included in the ACHAR which will be sent to RAPs.
Amanda Hickey (Amanda Hickey Cultural Services)	Artefact Heritage: Amanda Hickey registered past the due date for the ROI and therefore did not receive the original ACHAR assessment methodology letter. Amanda Hickey was sent the Methodology letter with the draft ACHAR on 10 October 2025 requesting comment.	N/A

2.4 Stage 4

A copy of the draft ACHAR was sent to the RAPs by email on 10 October 2025, requesting feedback by COB 7 November 2025. A copy of the ATR was provided with the draft ACHAR to provide further project context. Amanda Hickey (Amanda Hickey Cultural Services) was sent the ACHAR assessment methodology with the draft ACHAR due to a late registration (see Section 2.1.3).

A summary of received by Artefact Heritage is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Aboriginal stakeholder comments on the draft ACHAR

Person/ RAP group	Comment	Response
Phil Khan (Kamilaroi Yankuntjatjara Working Group)	Agrees with ACHAR and supports recommendations.	Acknowledged via email and included in ACHAR and log.

3.0 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Archaeological background

No previous Aboriginal archaeological investigations of the study area have been identified. Table 5 summarises the available reporting on previous archaeological investigations undertaken in the broader region, noting their relevance to the study area.

Overall, the reports surrounding the study area indicate the potential for significant archaeological deposits to occur within the site, subject to the level of historical ground disturbance, due to its environmental context. In particular, areas of remnant sandstone and elevated ridgelines are regarded as sensitive for Aboriginal objects as these features could have been suitable for past occupation. Additional areas of sandstone outcropping, notably sandstone platforms nearby the study area, are sensitive for art, with both historic and Aboriginal petroglyphs identified in its immediate vicinity. Aboriginal art and grinding grooves associated with the sandstone geology underlying the region are also shown to be vulnerable to both natural and human-induced impacts, such as erosion and foot traffic, which also threaten the preservation of shell middens. Altogether, Aboriginal sites are shown to have a strong association with areas where surface expressions of sandstone are present; however, their retention is subject to historical ground disturbance and exposure.

Table 5: Summaries of selected previous archaeological investigations undertaken in the vicinity of the study area

Report	Summary
Clegg, J. K., 1998. Work on the Engravings at Callan Point.	• Located 60m east of the study area • Multiple rock engravings were identified, including three portrait heads, a skiff, and several letters. While the identified sites are non-Aboriginal in origin, two fish carvings may be of Aboriginal origin, resembling motifs from confirmed Eora Art sites • The geological context, with ample sandstone surfaces, supports the creation of rock engravings and suggests the possibility of more similar sites nearby • The report notes the cumulative natural and human-made impacts threatening the preservation of historical and Aboriginal rock engravings in the area, including the following: ▪ Sandstone geology affects the survival of engravings, with natural cracks fostering vegetation that can damage surfaces ▪ Human activities such as construction, dumping, and vehicle use have altered the landscape, affecting engravings and middens ▪ Erosion and vegetation growth contribute to soil buildup over engravings ▪ Foot traffic is a significant factor in the loss of midden material. ▪ Some engravings are protected under soil, while others face risks from cycles of exposure and covering.
Mary Dallas Consulting Archaeologists, 2000. Callan Point	• Located 740m northeast of the study area

Report	Summary
Aboriginal Heritage Management Plan.	- The plan aimed to protect four registered shell midden sites located 740m north-east of the study area - Three of the four sites are middens within shelters, situated close to the foreshore - The sites have been affected by tidal action and erosion due to visitors walking near them - The report highlights preservation issues for Indigenous sites, noting that seemingly low-impact activities can cause significant damage.
Artefact Heritage, 2013. Rozelle Rail Yard, Preliminary Aboriginal Heritage Assessment. Prepared for NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure.	- The underlying geology of the study area is Hawkesbury sandstone, with parts of the Rozelle/White Bay area subject to infill - The assessment identified areas of remnant sandstone and elevated locations such as ridge lines, discussing the possibility of these being remnant intact landforms - Areas with ridgelines or remnant sandstone were assessed as having moderate archaeological potential - Elevated landforms in the area were deemed suitable for occupation and useful for identifying resources - The assessment highlighted the importance of the sandstone ridge as an area of occupation due to its proximity to resources associated with surrounding bays, making it a particularly suitable location for rock shelters.
Artefact Heritage, 2014. Bays Precinct; Preliminary Aboriginal Heritage Assessment. Prepared for Urban Growth NSW	- The assessment covered the Rozelle Rail Yards, Glebe Island, and land bordering White Bay, Rozelle Bay, and Blackwattle Bay - The Bays Station construction site was assessed as part of the White Bay Power Station and Glebe Island assessment areas - The majority of the White Bay Power Station area was identified as reclaimed and introduced land, containing no archaeological potential - The south-western portion of the White Bay Power Station was identified as the location of the original shoreline - This portion was considered unlikely to have undergone deep subsurface disturbance and was identified as having moderate archaeological potential.
Urbis 2023. Aboriginal Archaeological Salvage Excavation Report: Redevelopment of Concord Oval. Prepared for ADCO Construction Pty Ltd	- Salvage excavation took place at Concord Oval, Concord - A total of 32 1 m x 1 m salvage pits were excavated. A total of 28 stone artefacts were recovered, with 15 recovered during salvage excavation and 13 identified during historical archaeological excavation and monitoring - Disturbance across the salvage excavation area was observed as high to extreme - Following excavation, Concord Oval was assessed to generally represent an area of transient, low intensity use by Aboriginal people

3.2 AHIMS search

NOTE: The location of Aboriginal sites is considered culturally sensitive information. It is advised that this information, including the AHIMS data appearing on mapping below must be removed from this report if it is to enter the public domain.

A search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) was carried out on 1 and 2 September 2025 (AHIMS Client Service IDs: [REDACTED]) for an area of approximately 5 km x 5 km centred on the study area. The search aimed to identify any registered Aboriginal sites within or near the study area and to assess whether regional landscape features associated with Aboriginal sites could indicate their potential presence in the area.

The AHIMS search parameters were as follows:

GDA, Zone 56 [REDACTED] E
[REDACTED] N

A total of 26 Aboriginal sites are registered in the search area. Two of the recorded Aboriginal sites were identified as 'not a site' in the search results, reducing the total number of identified Aboriginal site to 24. The locations of the 24 identified Aboriginal sites are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3. The AHIMS search did not identify any Aboriginal sites within the study area, or within 200 m of the study area.

Among the 24 registered Aboriginal sites in the search area, a total of 9 types of site features were identified: Aboriginal Resource and Gathering, Art, Artefact, Modified Tree (Carved or Scarred), Potential Archaeological Deposit (PAD), Rock Shelter, Shell, and Water Hole. In general, these site features are strongly associated with the shoreline of the Parramatta River. Dominant site features throughout the AHIMS search area were Shell (41%, n=16) of overall site features, and Rock Shelters (33%, n=13) of overall site features. The frequency of Shell and Rock Shelter site features throughout the AHIMS Extensive Search Area reflects the presence of rock outcropping along the River shoreline, as well as the site's proximity to water.

3.3 Environmental background

3.3.1 Soils and geology, and Hydrology and landforms

The study area is located approximately 190 m south-east of the Iron Cove Bay (Figure 5). Early-20th Century maps document the reclamation of the shoreline by c.1916, whereby the site may have historically been situated even closer to water (Figure 7). The study area is also located approximately 550 m north-east of the former Long Cove Creek, a southern freshwater tributary of the Parramatta River that enters Iron Cove through the eastern arm at its head via Hawthorne Canal. Altogether, the site would have been situated amongst an extensive estuarine ecosystem replete with intertidal plants, aquatic resources and birds.

The study area is located on the upper slope of a spur, which decreases in elevation along a south-east to north-west axis towards the Long Cove shoreline (Figure 5). The associated ridgeline is located to the south-east of the study area. This elevated terrain relative to the surrounding tidal marshes would have made it an ideal location for procuring estuarine resources.

The southern extent of the study area lies within the Blacktown soil landscape (Figure 4). Blacktown soils are characterised by shallow to moderately deep, hard-setting, mottled texture contrast soils, with Red and Brown Podzolic Soils on crests grading to Yellow Podzolic Soils on lower slopes and drainage lines. Excavations in these soils suggest that deposits containing cultural material are

typically shallow, often less than 300 mm deep. The underlying shale geology has likely led to fewer site features such as grinding grooves, engravings, and pigmented or charcoal art, which are more common where sandstone geology is present (Figure 6). In contrast, the central portion of the study area, including most of Leichhardt Oval, is within the GyMEA soil landscape (Figure 4). GyMEA soils comprise shallow to moderately deep Yellow Earths and Earthy sands on crests and benches, with Siliceous sands and leached sands along drainage lines. These soils are loamy sand to sandy loam, strongly to slightly acidic (pH 4.5-6.0), and contain high organic matter, with common sandstone, ironstone, and charcoal fragments. Aboriginal objects in subsurface deposits are most likely to be found in deeper soil profiles within the GyMEA landscape, particularly where there has been minimal historical ground disturbance.

Figure 2: AHIMS extensive search results

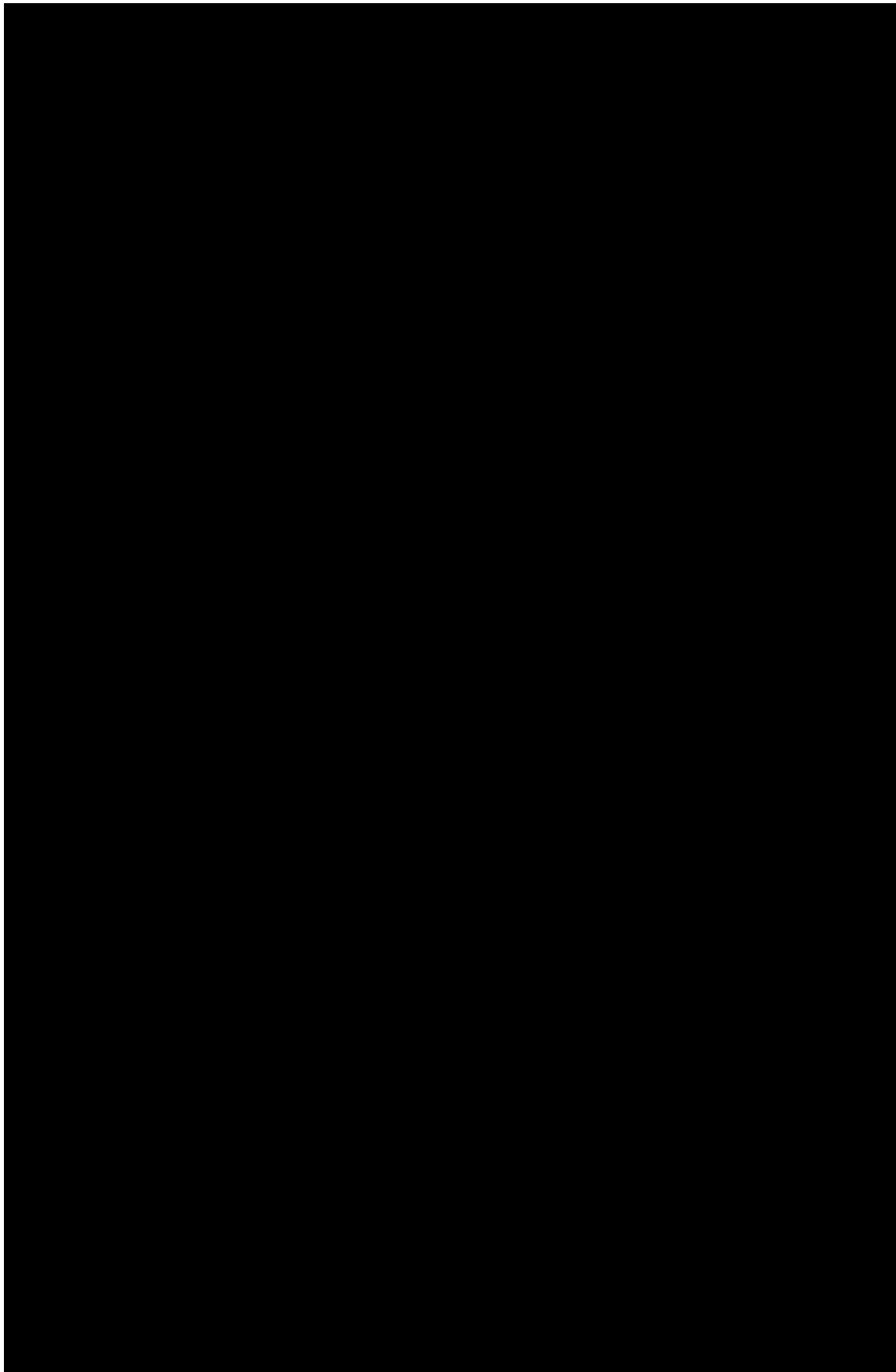


Figure 3: AHIMS detail search results

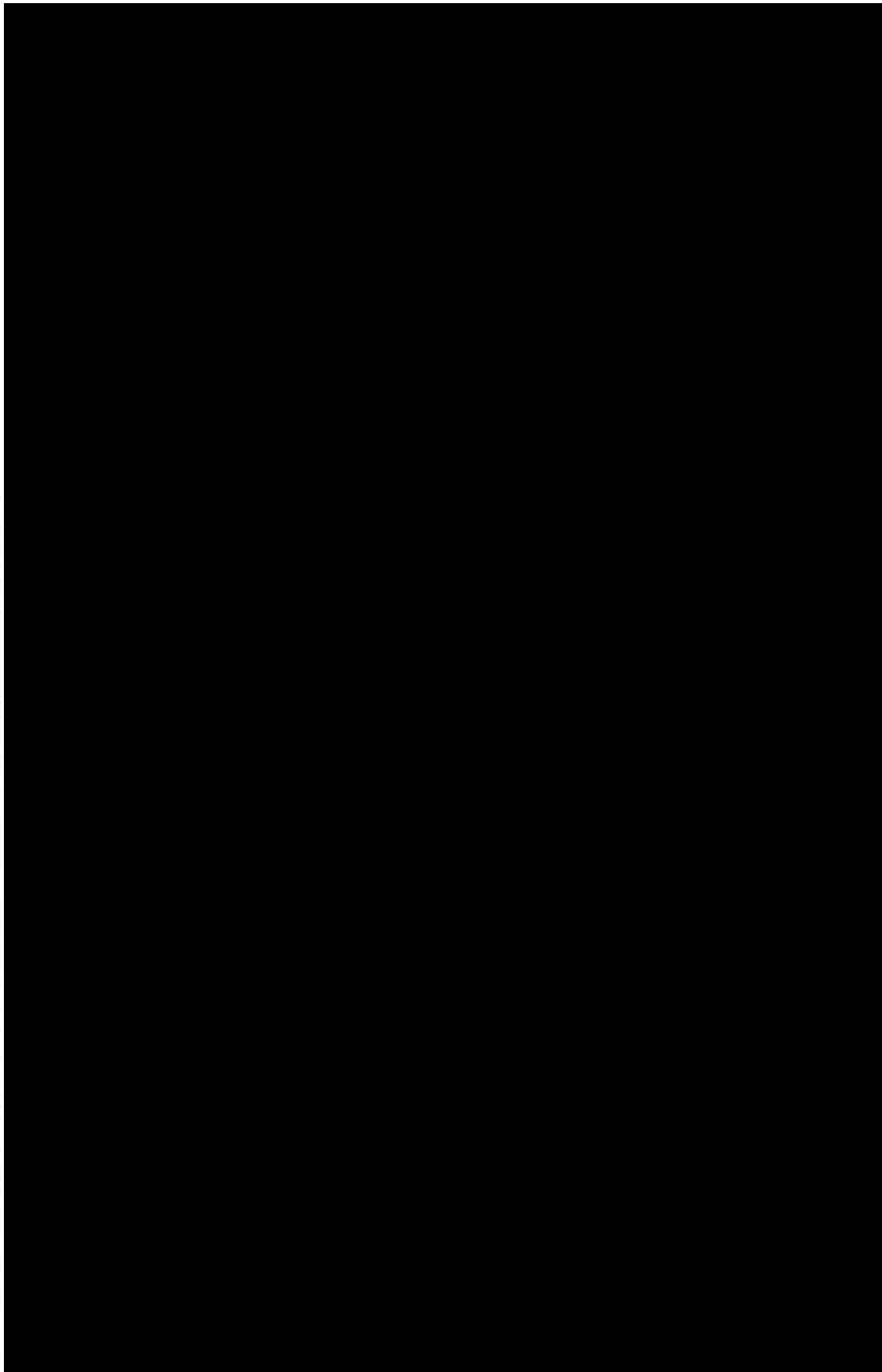


Figure 4: Soil landscapes

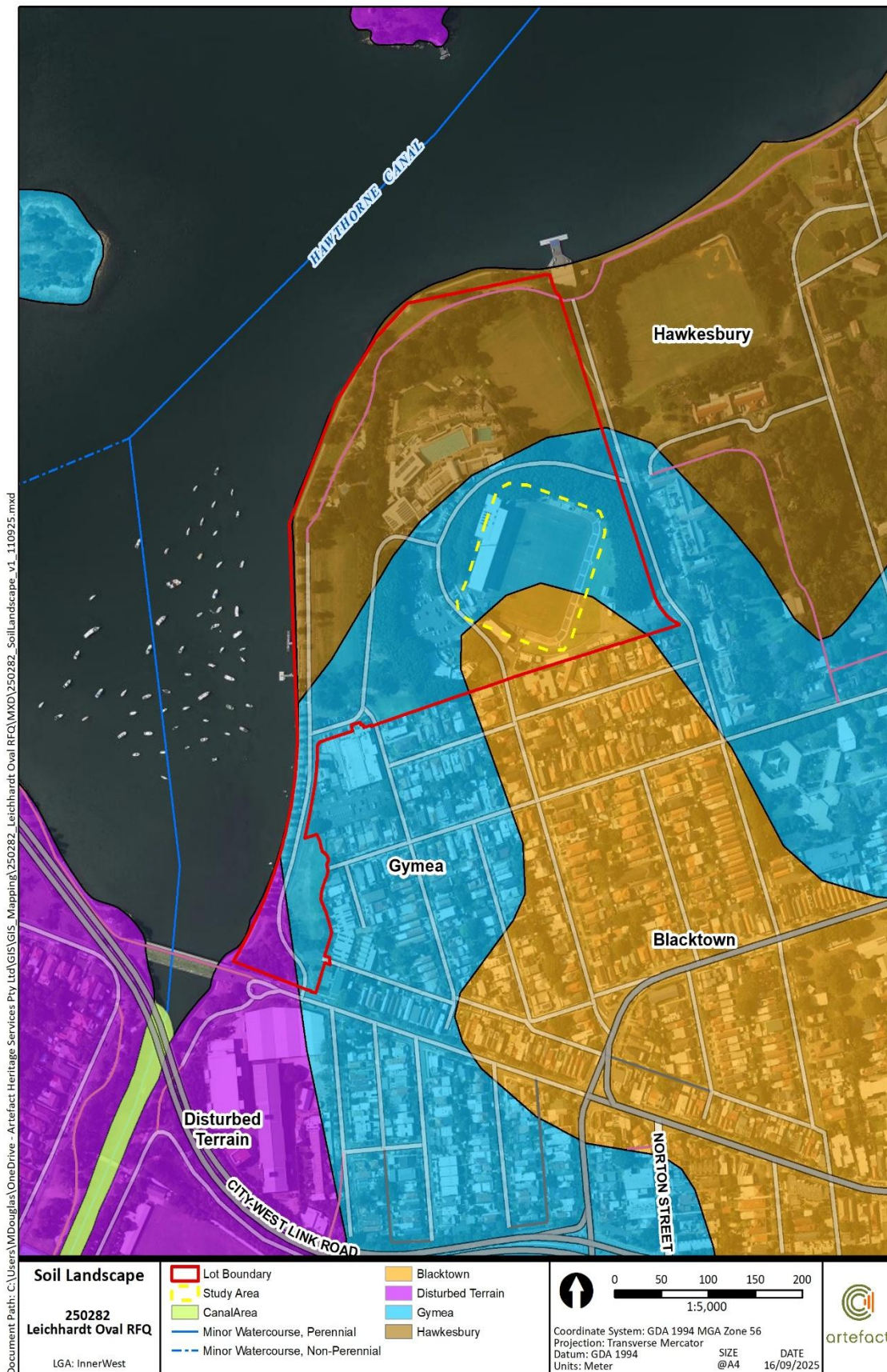


Figure 5: Topography and hydrology of the study area



Figure 6: Geology within the study area

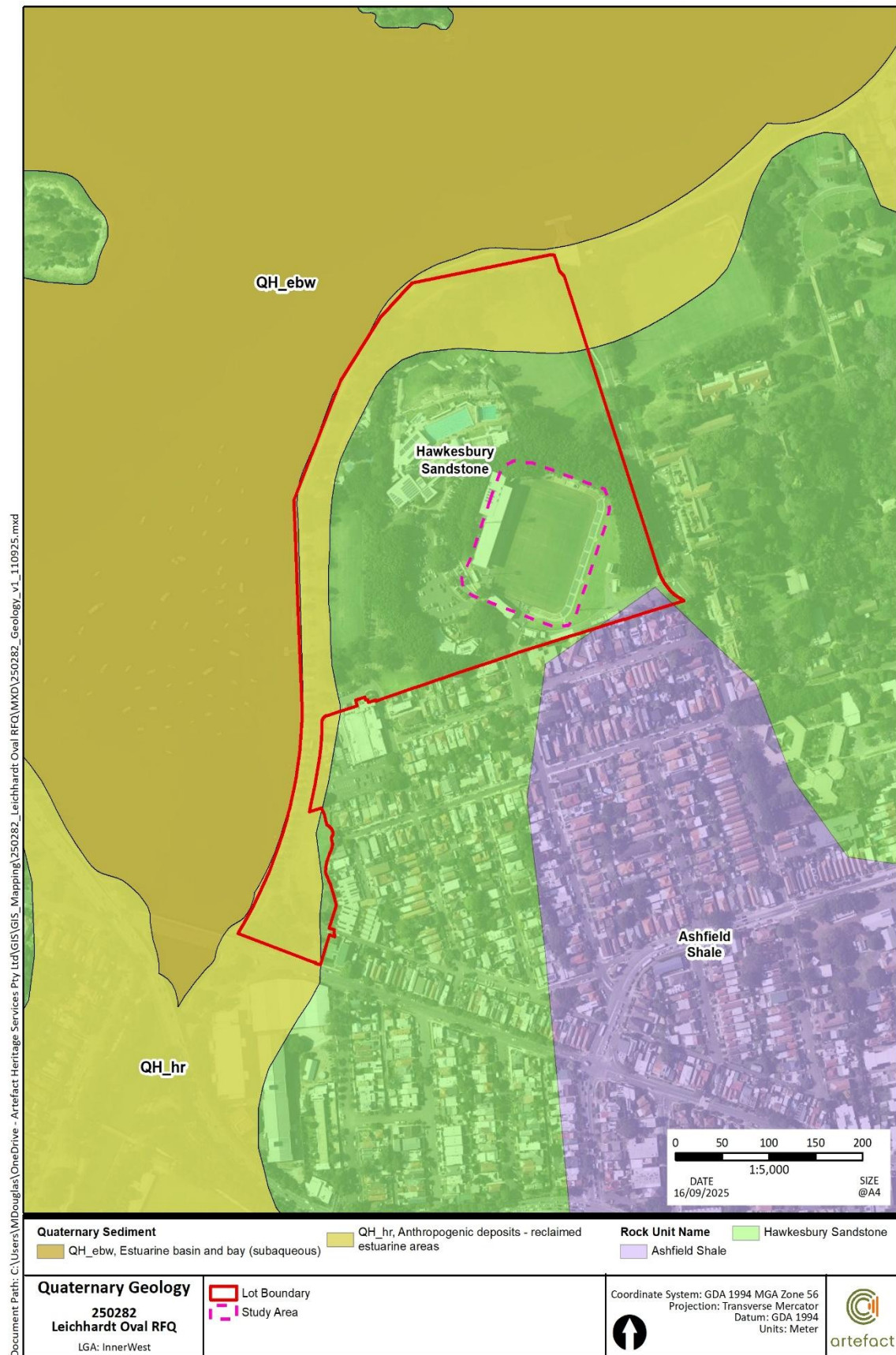


Figure 7: c.1800s Parish of Petersham with study area indicated. Note the presence of shoreline within the study area boundary (Source: HLRV)



3.3.2 Historic land disturbance

This overview of historical ground disturbance derives from Artefact Heritage's *Statement of Heritage Impact*, prepared for the Leichhardt Oval in 2025, with additional research undertaken where relevant to supplement the present assessment.

The majority of the area now known as Leichhardt Park (including the study area) was part of a 100-acre land initially granted to John Austen on 31st July 1819. One c.1800s parish plan of Petersham documents no improvements made to the study area during Austen's occupation of the site (Figure 7). This absence of development endured until the 1870s, at which time historical reports describe Lilyfield as largely barren, with the exception of some Indigenous plant species— especially, Samphire (*Sarcocornia quinquefolia*), Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*), and Scurvy Weed (*Commelina cyanea*).

More substantial settlement of Lilyfield did not occur until the 1880s, when the local Council began establishing public parks in the area. The study area was accordingly purchased in 1882 for Leichhardt Park, after which time it was subject to further subdivision (Figure 8). Despite the construction of roads within the vicinity of the study area by 1882, the site remained undeveloped.

Development of Leichhardt Park accelerated between 1887 and 1921, beginning with the construction of Leichhardt Municipal Baths in 1905 (outside the study area). By 1916, the study area was impacted by the construction of a sporting oval, grandstand and band rotunda (Figure 9). The flat topography of the study area relative to the natural slope is shown in Figure 5, indicating it was likely created by cut and mounding. These works likely involved bulk earthworks which would have significantly impacted archaeological materials within the sporting ground. Within Blacktown soils to the south of the oval, ground impacts would have been highest and likely caused the removal of any shallow archaeological deposits. These developments are documented by aerial photographs of the study area from 1930 (Figure 10), with further improvements such as timber post and rail fences documented by historical photos of the Leichhardt Oval from 1934.

A 1940 aerial photograph shows that an additional pavilion or grandstand had been constructed on the southern side of the oval between 1930-1940 (Figure 11). It is likely that this structure is the existing 1934 timber and brick pavilion, which may have since been extended or modified through the addition of brickwork over time. By 1951, the timber pavilion appears to have been further extended, possibly with the addition of the existing brick section (Figure 12 and Figure 13). Four additional small buildings were constructed around the Oval boundary by 1961, as documented by aerial imagery of the site from this year; however, these were all demolished between the 1970s and 1980s (Figure 14 to Figure 16), during which time the grounds' configuration was altered. Visible alterations to the site included a large concrete and steel western grandstand and a rectangular seating bowl, the existing brick scoreboard, as well as a carpark to the west of the study area.

The smaller southern grandstand located next to the timber and brick pavilion (referred to as the 'eastern grandstand' in the modifications section of the SHI inventory) was demolished in 2005. A major development was the addition of a northern wing (now players amenities) to the Western Grandstand, and other refurbishment works. A series of restoration works and developments have taken place within the study area in the late twentieth and twenty first century, as documented in the SHI inventory.

Altogether, the study area has been impacted by significant ground disturbance over time, chiefly caused by the artificial levelling of the slope (Figure 5) and the construction and demolition of buildings (Figure 17 and Figure 18). Ground disturbance is likely highest within the south of the sports field, where the levelling of the slope would have caused the removal of any shallow archaeological deposits within Blacktown soils. It is unconfirmed whether the excavated soils were distributed elsewhere throughout the site, potentially containing recontextualised Aboriginal artefacts. Additional

areas of high ground disturbance within the study area would include all grandstand areas (including the former “eastern grandstand”) and within the rectangular seating bowl due to the construction and demolition of buildings. Areas of moderate ground disturbance would include the band rotunda and brick scoreboard due to the construction of buildings and other sporting features. Finally, areas of low-moderate ground disturbance include within the western carpark, pedestrian pathways and garden beds where ground impacts would have been lowest.

Figure 8: 1882 Parish of Petersham subdivision plan with study area indicated. The designated park area is indicated to the south of the shore (Source: HLRV)



Figure 9: 1916 Parish of Petersham subdivision plan with study area indicated. Note the resumption of the foreshore along the north-western bounds of the site (Source: HLRV)

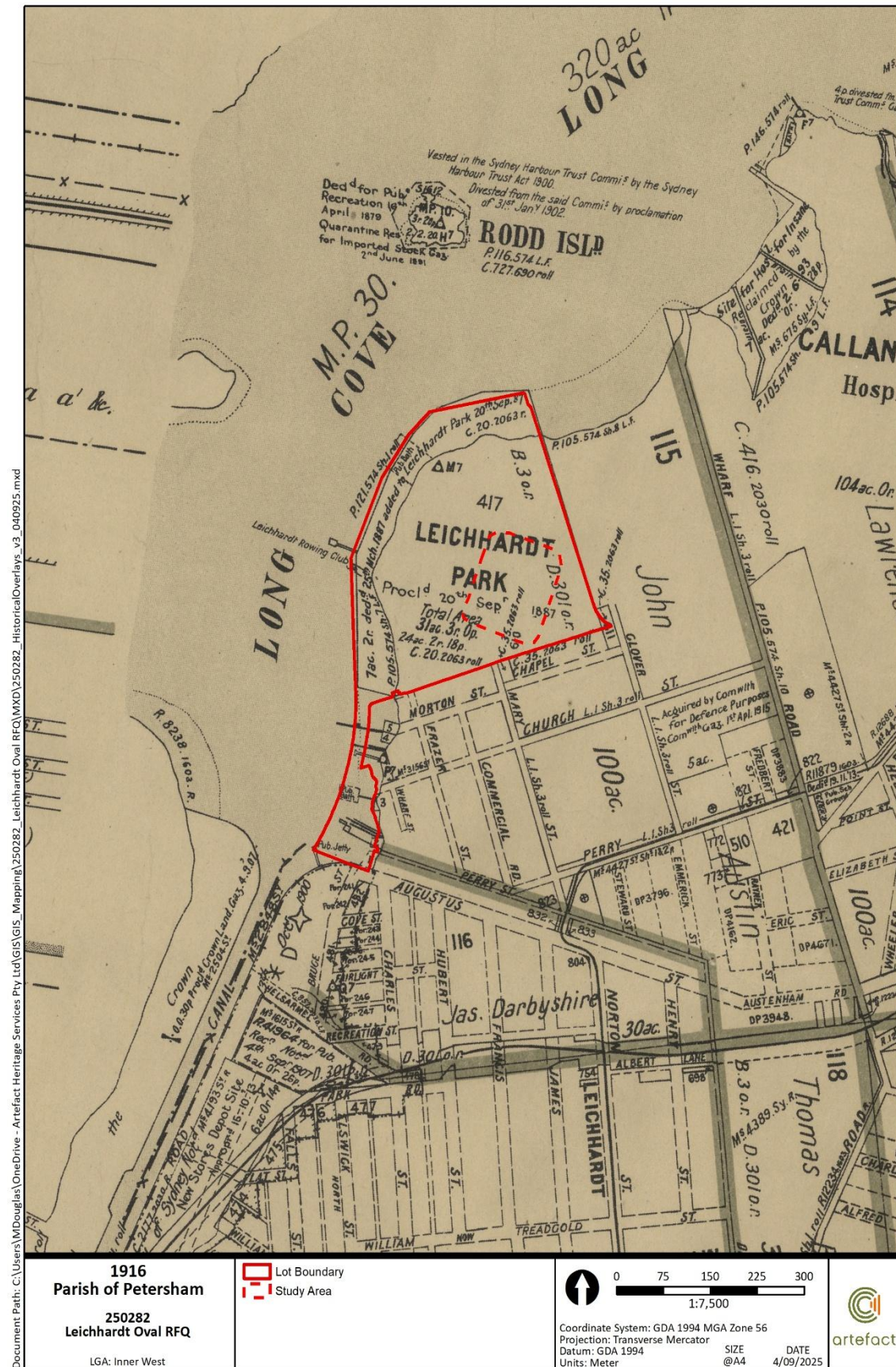


Figure 10: 1930 aerial image of study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 11: 1940 image of the study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 12: 1943 image of the study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 13: 1951 image of the study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 14: 1961 image of the study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 15: 1971 image of the study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 16: 1986 image of the study area after the construction of the west grandstand, lower seating bowl and car park (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 17: 1994 image of the study area showing the Giovinazzo Grove to the northwest of the aquatic centre (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



Figure 18: 2002 image of the study area (Source: NSW Spatial Viewer)



3.4 Predictive model

The predictive model comprises a series of statements regarding the nature and distribution of evidence of Aboriginal land use that is expected in the study area. Based on a synthesis of information from the results of desktop research, landscape context and previous archaeological assessment inside and surrounding the study area, the following predictive statements are made:

- Archaeological potential is lowest within areas of high historic ground disturbance: all grandstand areas (including the former southern grandstand known as the “eastern grandstand” in the modifications section of the SHI inventory), within the rectangular seating bowl and sporting oval. Archaeological deposits retained in these areas could include artefact and/or shell deposits, perhaps recontextualised from elsewhere in the site; however, their survival rate is contingent upon both natural erosion and the artificial modification of the slope
- Archaeological potential is highest within areas of low historic ground disturbance: within the western carpark, pedestrian pathways and garden beds. Archaeological deposits retained in these areas could include artefact and/or shell deposits, perhaps recontextualised from elsewhere in the site or retained in situ within moderately deep deposits
- Due to the absence of remnant vegetation, caused by historic land clearance, it is unlikely for culturally modified trees to occur anywhere throughout the site. Aerial imagery shows that the vegetation and trees surrounding the oval were planted post 1970s. Equally, due to the modification of the slope and developed nature of the study area, rock shelters are unlikely occur which could include art and/or other Aboriginal site features
- Due to its proximity to water, the study area could contain midden deposits including shell and/or artefacts. Despite the absence of a water source within the study area proper, Grinding Grooves could occur on unmodified sandstone platforms where water pooled sufficiently to sharpen stone tools
- Despite their prominence in the region, Rock Shelters are unlikely to be present in the study area. However, Art sites could be associated with unmodified sandstone platforms throughout the site.

4.0 SUMMARY OF FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

4.1 Archaeological Survey – 16 September 2025

An archaeological survey of the study area was undertaken on 16 September 2025. Neve Penklis (Graduate Heritage Consultant) and Jonny Love (Senior Heritage Consultant). Metropolitan LALC Senior Culture and Heritage Officer Raymond Weatherall and Inner West Council Cultural Advisor Deborah Lewis were also in attendance.

The study area contained less than 10% visibility as ground surfaces were either covered by hard surfaces such as concrete, low dense grass or thick leaf litter and pine needles. In areas of limited visibility, a large mix of soils was observed, including sand, dark brown topsoil, medium brown soil containing gravels and sub angular rocks including sandstone, and fill contain small to large subangular rocks. This indicates that soils have likely been redeposited and implies the disturbed nature of the study area. There were no areas of exposure of intact surfaces.

The survey concluded that the study area was significantly modified for the creation of the oval complex. Modification of the area included substantial cuts in the landscape, high artificial slopes used for seating and the establishment of hard surface areas for grandstands and access around the study area. As such, the study area varied greatly in heights / depths and it is unlikely for any remnant natural landscape to be present within the study area. Altogether, the study area has sustained significant ground impacts which the site inspection confirmed to be clear and observable in the landscape – particularly, caused by substantial cuts in the landscape and the construction of high artificial slopes.

Multiple underground services, including storm water drains altering the flow of water across the oval, were identified during the visual inspection. The storm drains were at least 0.5 m deep and contained rubbish and concrete. Altogether, the presence of underground services throughout the site represent clear and observable modifications of landscape to facilitate its current use as a sporting oval.

No Aboriginal objects were identified within the study area, nor was any potential for Aboriginal objects identified within the study area. The Metropolitan LALC representative advised the broader area had a significant Aboriginal history due to its location near creek lines and Parramatta River, but agreed that the study area had being significantly disturbed and was unlikely to contain Aboriginal objects.

5.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES

5.1 Methodology

The cultural assessment in this report includes information collected through desktop assessment and Aboriginal community consultation undertaken in accordance with the Consultation Requirements. This information was collected by Beatrix Ye (Heritage Consultant, Artefact Heritage).

5.1.1 Cultural landscape

The World Heritage Convention of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines a cultural landscape as one which has 'powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent' (UNESCO 1991). The relationship between Aboriginal Australians and the land is conceived in spiritual terms rather than primarily in material terms (Andrews et al 2006). Aboriginal cultural knowledge has been defined as:

Accumulated knowledge which encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the sustainable use of natural resources, and relationships between people, which are reflected in language, narratives, social organisation, values, beliefs and cultural laws and custom (Andrews et al 2006).

Aboriginal cultural knowledge was traditionally bequeathed through oral traditions from generation to generation. Within all Aboriginal communities there was a time of dislocation and upheaval associated with the arrival of colonial settlers. This widespread disruption resulted in much of the detailed knowledge and understanding of many of the elements of the cultural landscape being lost from the Aboriginal community, nonetheless many Aboriginal people maintain a strong connection to the land of their ancestors and collectively possess a wealth of knowledge passed down through the generations.

5.1.2 Types of values

Aboriginal people hold significant knowledge about traditional use of land before and after contact. The landscape which encompasses the study area has cultural value of importance to the Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal community collectively holds values and knowledge that relate to:

- Traditional values: these are passed down by family and community as part of ancient tradition
- Historical values: these are passed down by family and community and relate to the eras since colonisation; these may include information gained from historical source documents
- Contemporary values: these are values of modern importance and relevance for Aboriginal stakeholder groups.

There is often no clear separation between these values, and they collectively co-exist with equal importance in forming the value that Aboriginal people place on landscape, cultural heritage, intangible heritage, and particular landforms or parts of the landscape.

5.2 Identified Aboriginal cultural heritage values

Table 6 provides a summary of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values associated with the study area.

Table 6: Cultural heritage values identified for the study and surroundings

Cultural heritage value	Description	Source
Aboriginal occupation	Aboriginal people have cared for the land and waters of the Leichhardt area for tens of thousands of years.	Background research
Aboriginal resource and gathering, ceremony and tradition	The estuaries and surrounding open forests of tall turpentine and ironbark trees gave life to a rich diversity of animals and plants throughout the Leichhardt and Lilyfield areas. Wangal and Gadigal men and women fished in the waters, hunted in the forests and collected resources sustainably throughout this landscape. Ceremonial and burials would have occurred in various locations in the local region. The significance of the broader area to Aboriginal people continues to be acknowledged.	Background research, Phil Khan

5.3 Aboriginal cultural values within the study area

Background research has demonstrated that Aboriginal people have occupied the region around the study area for tens of thousands of years, while many Aboriginal people believe that they have been living on country since 'time immemorial'. The Parramatta River and Long Cove Creek are also highly significant to Aboriginal people. While the broader region is significant to Aboriginal people through their connection to the land as Aboriginal people would have utilised the shores for fishing and ceremonies, no specific cultural values have been associated with the study area. Additionally, it is unlikely that Aboriginal objects that may hold cultural significance will be present in the study area due to previous historical disturbance.

No specific cultural heritage values for the study area were identified by RAPs as part of the consultation process.

6.0 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

A significance assessment of the scientific, social, historic and aesthetic values of the study area is included below.

6.1 Significance assessment criteria

An assessment of the cultural heritage significance of an item or place is required in order to form the basis of its management. The Guide (OEH 2011: 10) provides guidelines, in accordance with the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2013) for significance assessment with assessments being required to consider the following criteria:

- Social values – does the area have a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons
- Historic values – is the area important to the cultural or natural history of the local area and/or region and/or state
- Scientific values - does the area have the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the cultural and natural history of the local area and/or region and/or state
- Aesthetic values – is the area important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics in the local area and/or region and/or state.

Scientific values should be considered in light of the following criteria:

- Research potential - does the evidence suggest any potential to contribute to an understanding of the area and/or region and/or state's natural and cultural history?
- Representativeness - how much variability (outside and/or inside the study area) exists, what is already conserved, how much connectivity is there?
- Rarity - is the study area important in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised? Is it in danger of being lost or of exceptional interest?
- Education potential - does the study area contain teaching sites or sites that might have teaching potential?

It is important to note that heritage significance is a dynamic value.

6.1.1 Historic value

Historic values refer to the association of place with aspects of Aboriginal history. Historic values are not necessarily reflected in physical objects, but may be intangible and relate to memories, stories or experiences.

No specific historic values associated with the study area have been identified during the desktop assessment. The consultation process did identify that the broader area including the shores of Lilyfield were Gadigal land and would have been used by Aboriginal people for fishing, hunting, camping, ceremonies and potentially burial sites. However, it was also noted through consultation that the study area is highly disturbed due to historical activity and therefore it is assessed as being unlikely that such historic values are associated with the study area.

6.1.2 Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value of a place relates to the sensory, scenic, architectural and creative aspects of a place. It may include visual aspects, such as form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric, and the smells and sounds associated with the place and its use.

The desktop assessment and archaeological survey of the study area concluded that the site has been subject to considerable disturbance and urbanisation which has impacted the aesthetic value of the place. This modification of the landscape would have impacted the local ecology to such an extent that it no longer resembles the original place in any sensory way. As a result, this assessment has identified no aesthetic values associated with the study area. Additionally, no aesthetic values for the study area were identified by RAPs as part of the consultation process.

6.1.3 Socio/cultural value

Social or cultural value encompasses the qualities for which a place has become a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment for Aboriginal people. Social or cultural value is how people express their connection with a place and the meaning that place has for them. Places of social or cultural value have associations with contemporary community identity. These places can have associations with tragic or warmly remembered experiences, periods, or events. Communities can experience a sense of loss should a place of social or cultural value be damaged or destroyed. Social or cultural values can therefore only be identified through consultation with Aboriginal people.

No specific socio/cultural values associated with the study area have been identified through the desktop assessment. However, background research and consultation indicate that the local area is significant to Aboriginal people as an area rich in resources and a location suitable for ceremony.

6.1.4 Scientific value

Scientific values refer to a site's potential to contribute information to our current understanding. As there are no Aboriginal objects or sites in the study area, nor is there potential for Aboriginal objects to be present, the study area possesses no scientific significance.

6.2 Statement of significance

The study area has been disturbed by previous development, and no Aboriginal sites or potential for Aboriginal objects have been identified within the study area. Due to this level of disturbance, the study area has no Aboriginal cultural heritage significance (Table 7).

Table 7: Significance assessment

Site name (AHIMS ID)	Research potential	Representativeness	Rarity	Education potential	Overall significance assessment
No AHIMS sites	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

7.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Proposed works

Refurbishment of the existing Leichhardt Oval at 68 Mary Street, Lilyfield to provide new and upgraded spectator and player amenities, broadcasting facilities, improved accessibility and increased number of fixed seating (no change to overall spectator capacity), including:

- Upgrades to the existing Western Grandstand, including:
 - Demolition of the existing spectator and player amenities located on the ground floor, existing seating, broadcast areas, hospitality and coaching facilities on level 2, existing stairs at the front of the grandstand and some facade elements
 - Upgrades to the existing ground floor to provide new player change rooms and facilities, medical facilities, facilities for match officials and coaching staff, spectator amenities, utilities and other 'match day' related facilities
 - Upgrades to and expansion of the mezzanine level within the grandstand to provide a new 'Grandstand Bar', gym, spectator amenities, stairs and storage, as well as the relocation of the existing telecommunications server
 - Upgrades to the existing level 2 to deliver new spectator seating, corporate suites, television and radio broadcasting facilities, spectator amenities and the upgrading of the existing Centurions Lounge corporate area
 - Improved spectator circulation and egress arrangements to meet standards and general upgrades and maintenance to the existing building.
- The construction of a new 'Northern Grandstand', including:
 - Earthworks and modification of existing retaining wall and embankment
 - A new concourse to provide spectator amenities and food and beverage offerings
 - New spectator seating to level 1 of the grandstand above the concourse
 - The removal of trees (as advised by the arborist) to facilitate the new grandstand
- The replacement of existing seating to the lower seating bowl surrounding the playing field to provide greater amenity and improved wheelchair accessibility.

The proposed works will impact the ground surface and subsurface area of the study area through demolition and rebuilding works. The impacts will extend across the study area.

7.2 Aboriginal heritage impact

Based on the background research and archaeological survey conducted as part of this report, no Aboriginal objects or areas of archaeological potential are located within the study area, nor is there any potential for Aboriginal objects to be present. As such, the proposed development would have no impact to Aboriginal heritage.

A summary of the impacts is in Table 8.

Table 8: Impact assessment

Site name (AHIMS ID)	Type of harm	Degree of harm	Consequence of harm
No AHIMS Sites	None	None	None

7.3 Ecological Sustainable Development principles

The Guide (OEH 2011) specifies that Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) principles must be considered when assessing harm and recommending mitigation measures in relation to Aboriginal objects.

The following relevant ESD principles are outlined in Section 3A of the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*:

- Decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long term and short term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations (the 'integration principle')
- If there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation (the 'precautionary principle')
- The present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations (the 'principle of intergenerational equity').

7.3.1 The integration principle

The preparation of this ACHAR demonstrates regard for the integration principle by considering Aboriginal heritage values and impacts to these from the proposal during the planning phase. The nature of the proposal is in itself one that contributes to the long term economic and social needs of current and future residents of the area.

7.3.2 The precautionary principle

This ACHAR has been prepared to the Code of Practice therefore has met the industry standards for scientific confidence and has determined that there are no Aboriginal sites or potential for Aboriginal objects within the study area.

7.3.3 The principle of intergenerational equity

The proposed works would adhere, as close as possible, to the principle of intergenerational equity by collating scientific and cultural information on former Aboriginal occupation of the study area through the previous investigations and this ACHAR. The ATR prepared an archaeological assessment of the study area and synthesised the regional character of Aboriginal objects and sites for posterity and future generations.

7.4 Cumulative impacts

A cumulative impact is an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage resulting from the incremental impact of the action/s of a development when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. As the study area has been impacted by previous development, no further cumulative impacts are possible.

8.0 MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

8.1 Guiding principles

The overall guiding principle for cultural heritage management is that where possible Aboriginal sites should be conserved.

Where unavoidable impacts occur then measures to mitigate and manage impacts are proposed. Mitigation measures primarily concern preserving the heritage values of sites beyond the physical existence of the site. The most common methods involve detailed recording of Aboriginal objects, archaeological test and salvage excavations, artefact analysis and, where appropriate, reburial of Aboriginal objects in a location determined by the RAPs.

Mitigation measures vary depending on the assessment of archaeological significance of a particular Aboriginal site and are based on its research potential, rarity, representatives and educational value. In general, the significance of a site would influence the choice of preferred conservation outcomes and appropriate mitigation measures, usually on the following basis:

- Low archaeological significance – conservation where possible. SSD Conditions of Approval would be required to impact the site before work can commence
- Moderate archaeological significance – conservation where possible. If conservation was not practicable, further archaeological investigation would be required such as salvage excavations or surface collection in accordance with the SSD Conditions of Approval
- High archaeological significance – conservation as a priority. Where all other practical alternatives have been discounted mitigation measures such as comprehensive salvage excavations in accordance with the SSD Conditions of Approval would be required.

This assessment has identified no potential for Aboriginal objects to be retained within the study area, nor has it identified areas of archaeological potential which are at risk of harm by the proposal. As the proposal is therefore unlikely to cause harm to Aboriginal objects, no further archaeological investigation is recommended by the present report. Any unexpected Aboriginal objects encountered during the development would be managed under an Unexpected Finds Procedure (UFP).

8.2 Proposed measures

As no Aboriginal objects or areas of archaeological potential have been identified within the study area, it is unlikely that Aboriginal objects are at risk of being harmed. Therefore, no mitigation measures are proposed.

Unexpected finds must be managed through an Unexpected Finds Procedure (UFP). An UFP would outline the protocols necessary in the event that any unexpected Aboriginal objects, sites or archaeological deposits are identified during the works. This policy should be presented to project personnel as part of site inductions for the project

8.3 Changes to the project area

Advice provided within this ACHAR is based upon the most recent information provided by the proponent at the time of writing. Any changes made to the project should be assessed by an archaeologist in consultation with the RAPs. Any changes that may impact on Aboriginal sites not

assessed as part of the project may warrant further investigation and result in changes to the recommended management and mitigation measures.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Summary of findings

The ACHAR has made the following conclusions through a combination of desktop assessment, archaeological survey and community consultation:

- No known Aboriginal objects listed on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) are present within the study area
- No unregistered Aboriginal objects were identified within the study area, nor were any areas of potential for concealed Aboriginal objects identified within the study area
- While the study area is located within 200 m of water and within proximity to sandstone resources, extensive modification of the study area would have substantially disturbed or removed subsurface deposits
- The study area is assessed to be of no scientific significance and does not contain specific historical, aesthetic, socio/cultural values
- While the proposal would cause significant ground disturbance throughout the study area, there is no evidence that such works will cause harm to Aboriginal sites.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations and mitigation measures are made:

- This assessment has identified no potential for Aboriginal objects to be retained within the study area, nor has it identified areas of archaeological potential which are at risk of harm by the proposal
- No further archaeological investigation is recommended by the present report
- Ongoing consultation with the RAPs should continue throughout the life of the project
- A heritage induction including an UFP should be prepared and all workers should be inducted prior to the commencement of works
- Where there are changes to the project area or development proposal, additional archaeological assessment may be required.

10.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A – ARCHAEOLOGICAL TECHNICAL REPORT

Redacted from public view

APPENDIX B – CONSULTATION RECORDS

Redacted from public view



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