



Gunnedah Solar Farm
Chance Finds Protocol

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report provides the Chance Finds Protocol for the Gunnedah Solar Farm.

Gunnedah Solar Farm Pty Ltd proposes to construct and operate a 150 megawatt solar farm in Gunnedah, NSW. Proposed work is deemed as State Significant Development (SSD) and an approval was granted for the Project in March 2019. An Aboriginal Heritage Assessment was required and endorsed as part of the approvals process. That Aboriginal Heritage Assessment is contained in Appendix A.

The subject land, hereafter referred to as the study area, is located at 765 Orange Grove Road, Gunnedah, NSW. It is comprised of Lot 1 DP1202625, Lot 153 DP754954, Lot 264 DP754954, Lot 2 DP801762, Lot 151 DP754954 and part of Lot 1 DP186590, with a total area of 692 hectares. It is bounded by Orange Grove Road to the south and private properties to the east, north and west. Namoi River is approximately 800 metres to the south of the study area (included as Figure 1 in Appendix B).

Background research, desktop assessment and archaeological field survey did not identify any Aboriginal objects (artefacts) or Aboriginal archaeological sites within the study area. No significant Aboriginal cultural features were identified within the study area by the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council. In general, the study area displayed low archaeological potential due to combinations of archaeologically unfavourable topography, flooding, agricultural activity and contemporary disturbance of the land.

2 UNANTICIPATED FINDS PROTOCOL – ABORIGINAL OBJECTS

If any impact is expected to an Aboriginal object, an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) is usually required from NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment. Section 89A of *National Park and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW) (NPW Act) requires that any person who is aware of the existence of an Aboriginal Object is required to notify the Director-General of the NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment.

The NPW Act protects *Aboriginal objects* which are defined as:

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

Aboriginal objects include, but are not just limited to stone artefacts, scarred trees, shell middens, axe grinding grooves, pigment or engraved rock art and human burials. Post-contact Aboriginal sites include missions and town camps, the artefacts in these can include items made from glass and metal.

To ensure compliance with Section 89A RCRI would undertake the following:

- Ensure all staff and contractors working on-site undergo an induction relating to Aboriginal heritage (refer 2.2).
- In the event a suspected Aboriginal object is discovered:
- All works will cease in the immediate area (10m buffer) and the find spot will be marked with high visibility barrier fencing.
- The location will be recorded with a GPS using Eastings and Northings in GDA zone 56.
- A photograph of the artefact will be undertaken with a scale (e.g. ruler) and a photograph of the general location noting the orientation (e.g. 'looking north' or 'looking east' etc.).
- The Proponents representative will be first contacted and advised of the find.
- The proponents representative will then advise the Red Chief LALC and the Archaeologist Biodiversity and Conservation Division | Department of Planning, Industry and Environment of the find.
- Consistent with the protocol outlined in Section 2.1, the discovered site will, in accordance with the preference of the RAP representative, either be reburied on-site (with GPS co-ordinates recorded) or taken to the safe keeping place.

If collected for safe keeping, the collection will be carried out in accordance with Requirement 26 (Stone artefact disposition and storage) or Requirement 23 (Recording culturally modified trees) of the Archaeologist Biodiversity and Conservation Division | Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Code of Practice for the Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects In New South Wales (DECCW 2010). The key points of this code of practice are to:

- Create a full catalogue of artefacts – including photographs and drawings.
- Ensure correct storage and labelling of artefacts.
- Record details of final location of artefacts (GPS coordinates, photographs, maps etc) Culturally modified trees must not be harmed without a Permit or modification of project approvals.

Specifically, for an unanticipated stone artefact find, the following will occur:

- A full catalogue will be made – including photographs and drawings of the artefacts.
- The catalogue will be printed and an electronic copy will also be made.
- All artefacts will be either individually bagged or bagged in identifiable units that are easily referenced back to the catalogue.
- The artefacts will be double-bagged in plastic zip-lock bags with an external label written in permanent marker, and a sturdy label placed within the zip-lock bag (also in perm marker).
- Artefacts will be placed in an impervious storage container (e.g. plastic container) which will be labelled as above.
- Records of the final location will be made that include grid coordinates of final location, site plan/mud map, depth of burial (if buried) and photograph records.

Specifically, for an unanticipated culturally modified trees find, the following will occur:

- Culturally modified trees must not be harmed during recording. Any harm to a culturally modified tree requires an AHIP.
- The attributes and features that must be recorded for culturally modified trees are contained within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment AHIMS Feature Recording Form and Feature Recording Table – Modified Tree.
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment requires that identification and terminology for archaeological consideration and recording of carved and scarred trees be consistent with that specified in Aboriginal scarred trees in New South Wales, a field manual (DEC and Andrew Long 2005), available at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/conservation/AboriginalScarredTrees.htm.
- Where groups of culturally modified trees are present this must be noted and must be mapped at an appropriate level of detail.
- Photographs with a clearly visible, appropriately sized (mm or cm for close-ups, tens of cm or m for distance and context) graded metric scale must be taken, showing:
 - the complete scar
 - close-up details of the scar where this is present and informative (e.g. tool marks)
 - the tree in its environmental context.
- A sketch of the tree must be made. The sketch should show relevant features such as the location and shape of the scar(s), the location of features such as tool marks, overall condition, damage, other identifying marks, nature of the dry-face and epicormic stems (if present).
- The identification of tree scars as being Aboriginal in origin is often subject to uncertainty (DEC and Andrew Long 2005: 36–49). Any uncertainty associated with a decision to record a scarred tree as an Aboriginal object should be detailed

on the Feature Recording Form. The advice of an arborist (where it may resolve an issue of potential cultural origin) should be sought prior to a 'possible' scarred tree being recorded and registered on AHIMS.

Within three months of making any chance finds discovery Gunnedah Solar Farm Pty Ltd would inform Archaeologist Biodiversity and Conservation Division | Department of Planning, Industry and Environment of its existence through a qualified archaeologist submitting an AHIMS recording form for each discovery. The person submitting the information will be supplied with the information recorded at the time of field recording and/or collection.

2.1 PROPOSED PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

In the event that an object or artefact is found the following strategies shall be employed:

- Notifying the proponents representative
- Marking the location on a plan
- Erecting barricade fencing

2.1.1 MITIGATION

In all other cases, where avoidance is not an option, recorded artefacts will be collected prior to commencement of initial ground disturbance and in consultation with the Aboriginal stakeholders representative, removed to a safe location either on-site and reburied, or to some keeping place as nominated by the Aboriginal stakeholders representative.

The collection will be carried out in accordance with Requirement 26 or 23 of the Archaeologist Biodiversity and Conservation Division | Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Code of Practice for the Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales (DECCW 2010). The key points of this code of practice are to;

- Create a catalogue of artefacts – including photographs and drawings.
- Ensure correct storage and labelling of artefacts.
- Record details of final location of artefacts (GPS coordinates, photographs, maps etc.)
- Specifically, if any objects found, kept or returned to their original location the following will occur.
- All artefacts will be either individually bagged or bagged in identifiable units that are easily referenced back to the catalogued recordings in the CHA.
- The artefacts will be double-bagged in plastic zip-lock bags with an external label written in permanent marker, and a sturdy label placed within the zip-lock bag (also in permanent marker).
- Artefacts will be placed in an impervious storage container (e.g. plastic container) which will be labelled as above.
- Records of the final location will be made that include grid coordinates of final location, site plan/mud map, depth of burial (if buried) and photographic records.

2.2 ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE INDUCTION

All staff and contractors working on the GSF will undergo Aboriginal Cultural Heritage induction. The induction will include the following:

- Clear advice that it is an offence under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* to destroy, deface or otherwise disturb an Aboriginal object without first obtaining the consent of the Director-General of the NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment.
- An explanation of what the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) requires in the event that material suspected to be of Aboriginal heritage is found (Unanticipated Finds Protocol).

2.3 LONG TERM MANAGEMENT

Prior to commencing operations, Gunnedah Solar Farm is required to prepare an Operations Environmental Management Plan (OEMP). The long-term management of protected Aboriginal heritage items will be addressed in the OEMP.

2.4 ADDITIONAL INVESTIGATIONS

If, through future development planning, impacts become necessary outside the study area covered in the CHA, heritage assessment of these areas will need to be carried out.

3 UNANTICIPATED FINDS PROTOCOL – HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

This information is sourced from NSW Roads and *Maritime Services Cultural Heritage Guidelines 2015*.

Human skeletal remains, and possible human remains, are covered by several different laws.

The task of determining which laws may apply to each situation is extremely complex, dependent potentially on the racial origin, location, date and manner of death. Determining these is a highly specialised role and can take considerable time. If human skeletal remain are found, work in the vicinity ceases, the Police are notified and that no further interference takes place to the site.

The only other action required is for a heritage or other relevant specialists to determine whether the bone can be identified as definitely animal or human. If there is any doubt, then the procedure continues and legal and forensic specialists take over.

If human skeletal remain are suspected:

- All bones which are clearly not animal must be treated as potential human skeletal remains.
- Work around them must stop and the bones must be protected, immediately reported to the proponent's representative and investigated urgently.
- The Police will be called as soon as it is known they have potential to be human.