

Preliminary Aboriginal Heritage Assessment

**Two portions of the North Eveleigh site
(Part Lot 4 in DP862514) Redfern, NSW**



March 2008

Report to the Redfern-Waterloo Authority

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Consultant Archaeologist**

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1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the findings of a preliminary Aboriginal heritage assessment undertaken by Paul Irish, Consultant Archaeologist (hereafter “the consultant”) of two small parcels of land within the northeastern corner of Part Lot 4 DP 862514 (see **Figure 1**), at the request of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority. Specifically, these two portions of land (hereafter “the subject lands”), totalling around 2000m² in size, represent the only areas within the North Eveleigh site north of the railway which have not been massively excavated, and therefore could possibly retain archaeological evidence of the past Aboriginal use of the area (see **Figure 1**).

This preliminary Aboriginal heritage assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Department of Environment & Climate Change’s¹ 2005 *Draft Guidelines for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and Community Consultation* which were prepared for the Department of Planning to identify matters for consideration in the assessment of Aboriginal heritage impacts of projects being assessed under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 (as amended).

Specifically, these draft guidelines recommend, as a first step, the preparation of a preliminary assessment “to determine if the project is likely to have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage”, in which case a formal Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment may then be required, under the Director-General’s requirements for the development of the North Eveleigh site.

This preliminary assessment has involved a review of archaeological and other data pertinent to the site and a brief site inspection. Brief consultation with the local Aboriginal community, specifically the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, was undertaken. It has not considered any areas outside of the subject lands as defined above and depicted in **Figure 1**.

2.0 Aboriginal Community Consultation

For the purposes of the current preliminary Aboriginal heritage assessment, brief consultation was undertaken with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, to provide an initial Aboriginal community perspective on the assessment, particularly in relation to any cultural/historical associations with the site.

Specifically Mr Allen Madden, Cultural & Education Officer with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council was contacted by the consultant and forwarded a letter identifying the subject lands, outlining the initial assessment of their archaeological potential and some notes on possible historical associations. Mr Madden subsequently inspected the site and produced a letter report outlining the views of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council with respect to this preliminary Aboriginal heritage assessment. This document is included as **Appendix 1** to this report and is discussed below.

¹ Then Department of Environment & Conservation

Two Portions of the North Eveleigh Site (Part Lot 4 in DP862514) Redfern, NSW

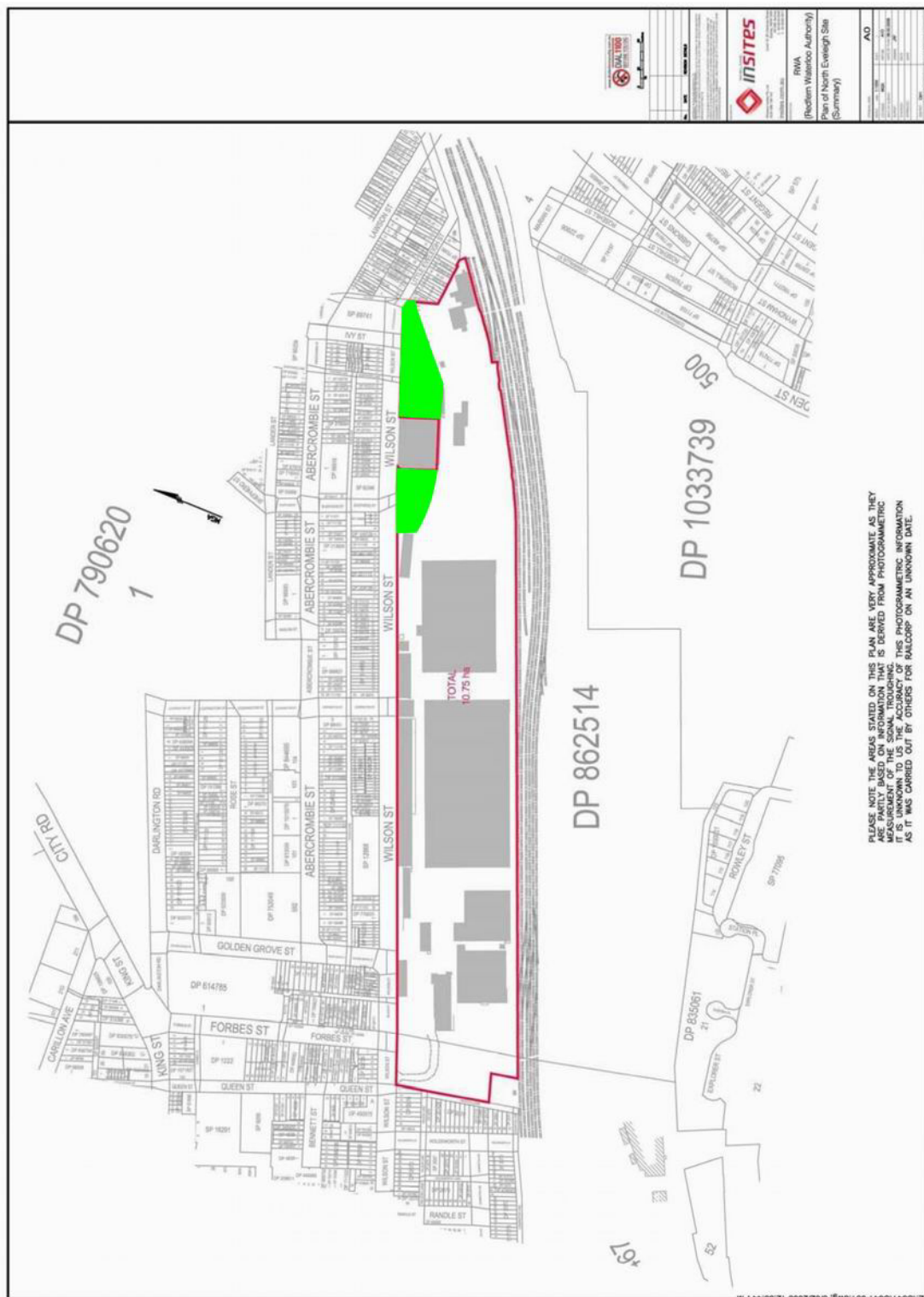


Figure 1. The subject lands (green) within the North Eveleigh site (Based map supplied by Redfern-Waterloo Authority).

3.0 Preliminary Archaeological Assessment of the Site

The site is underlain by Triassic Wianamatta Shale bedrock which has weathered to produce soils of the Blacktown Soil Landscape. These soils are residual soils formed by the *in situ* weathering of the parent material (in this case shale bedrock).

Archaeological deposits in these soils are likely to be restricted to the upper levels of the A horizon and are vulnerable to natural erosion and historical disturbance. Both of these factors can easily remove or significantly disturb any archaeological deposits located within them.

All original soil, clay subsoil and the upper layers of the underlying shale bedrock have been removed elsewhere in the North Eveleigh site by the massive excavations undertaken during the development of the rail facility there.

The subject lands have not undergone this massive excavation. However they have been impacted by the construction/installation of large buildings (e.g. the Chief Mechanical Engineers Office building), hard stand surfaces, subsurface infrastructure and garden landscaping east of the Chief Mechanical Engineers Office building. It would be considered unlikely that such impacts would not have resulted in the complete disturbance, if not removal, of all original topsoil.

Geotechnical testing undertaken in 1998 included test pits and descriptions of exposed slopes around the southern edges of the subject lands, suggesting that the area is characterised by introduced material (fill) on clay subsoil². The absence of original topsoil was confirmed during a site visit by the consultant on 14 March 2008 which noted exposed shale bedrock at the top of slope under the current Fire Brigade building and behind the Trackfast Depot building. No undisturbed original soil was noted, and some form of gross disturbance to all portions of the subject lands was observed, from building construction to landscaping.

A search of the central register of Aboriginal sites for NSW, the Department of Environment and Climate Change Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System was undertaken on 13 March 2008 of a 2km x 2km area centred on the subject land³. This demonstrated that no previously registered Aboriginal sites are located within or immediately adjacent to the subject land.

For these reasons, the subject lands are assessed as retaining no potential for surface or subsurface Aboriginal archaeological material. No further Aboriginal *archaeological* works are considered necessary prior to any future development within the subject lands. Specifically the preparation of a formal Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment is not considered warranted on *archaeological* grounds.

² Jeffery & Katauskas Pty Ltd 1998. *Geotechnical Investigation of Redevelopment Potential at Eveleigh Workshops* (Report to CH2M Hill on behalf of Rail Estate)

³ Search of AMG coordinates in Zone 56 E332000-334000, N6247000-6249000.

4.0 Preliminary Assessment of Aboriginal cultural/historical associations

Assessing Aboriginal cultural heritage significance also includes a consideration of the cultural or historical significance of places to the Aboriginal community today.

The Redfern area in general is well known for its recent Aboriginal associations, primarily with residential areas and community services which have developed in areas adjacent to the subject lands over the last century⁴. Work was a major factor in drawing Aboriginal people to the area in the early 20th century. The Eveleigh Railyards are known to have been historically important to Aboriginal people as a major local employer which served to attract Aboriginal people to the Redfern area from across New South Wales. Some Aboriginal people in the local community today have relatives who worked at the railyards (Allen Madden pers. comm. 26/3/08).

An exhaustive search of previous research has been outside of the scope of the current preliminary assessment, but it does not appear that this historical significance has been the subject of intensive past study. It does not appear to be recognised in official heritage listings of the site. For example, the State Heritage Register listing⁵ for the Eveleigh Railway Workshops does not discuss the significance of the site to the history of the Redfern Aboriginal community, or the involvement of Aboriginal people in the workforce, though it is possible that some of the supporting documentation (not examined for this preliminary assessment) may do so.

Documentation of this history and its significance (for example through oral history and archival research) could form a basis for the historical interpretation of the North Eveleigh site in the context of future development. It should thus be considered an opportunity rather than a constraint, as it would be unlikely to result in any physical limitations on the nature and scope of development of the North Eveleigh site in general, and not within the subject lands of the current study specifically, beyond those which may already be imposed by the built heritage of the site.

It is considered most unlikely that, within the specific area of the subject lands of this report, there are physical remains of Aboriginal historical associations with the place. Based on preliminary consultation with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, it appears also unlikely that the specific area of the subject lands retain specific cultural or historical significance to Aboriginal people, although it may do so as an element of the broader North Eveleigh and Eveleigh Railyards site. This could only be confirmed through further consultation with the local Aboriginal community.

Consideration should be given to documenting the historical significance of the North Eveleigh site to the local Aboriginal community for its role in the development of that community. Such research would only be practical if undertaken for the entire North

⁴ See for example Museum of Sydney 1996. *Guwanyi: Stories of the Redfern Aboriginal community* (Museum of Sydney) and Anderson, K.J. 1993. "Place narratives and the origins of inner Sydney's Aboriginal settlement, 1972-73", *Journal of Historical Geography* 19(3):314-335.

⁵ Number 01140 gazetted 2 April 1999.

Eveleigh site rather than the subject lands or other individual portions of that larger area.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The subject lands are completely historically disturbed and do not retain any Aboriginal archaeological potential. The subject lands do not require further archaeological investigation, such as the preparation of a formal Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment. On *archaeological* grounds, the subject lands do not have significance to Aboriginal cultural heritage. This recommendation is supported by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (see **Appendix 1**).

Based on the findings of this report and preliminary Aboriginal community consultation (with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council), it does not appear that the subject lands retain specific Aboriginal cultural/historical significance in and of themselves, however they form part of the broader North Eveleigh site, which has Aboriginal cultural/historical significance for its role in the development of the local Redfern Aboriginal community.

This significance would most appropriately be managed through archival and oral historical research together with the local Aboriginal community into the nature and significance of the Aboriginal connections with the North Eveleigh railyards as a whole (as opposed to for individual portions of that site). Such research should be undertaken prior to or during the preparation of an Interpretation Plan for the North Eveleigh site at the project application stage.

This would assist in the interpretation of the subject lands in the context of future development, but would not represent a physical constraint to the development of the subject lands, in addition to that which may already be posed by the built heritage of the site. The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, whose members include people with direct or familial connections to the North Eveleigh site, supports the idea of this research and should be involved in it (see **Appendix 1**).

While it is recommended that further research is undertaken and used in the interpretation of the North Eveleigh site, there does not appear to be archaeological or Aboriginal cultural/historical grounds for the preparation of a formal Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for the subject lands.

Appendix 1

Correspondence of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council



**METROPOLITAN LOCAL
ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL**

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28 March 2008

Paul Irish
Consultant Archaeologist
7 Mitchell St
Arncliffe NSW 2205

Dear Paul,

Re: Preliminary Aboriginal Heritage Assessment of a portion of the North Eveleigh site, Redfern (Part of Lot 4 in DP862514)

I refer to our recent telephone conversations about the above site and your letter of 26th March discussing your preliminary assessment and proposed recommendations for the site. I have now briefly inspected the site myself and can make the following statements on behalf of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council supports your assessment that these two small parts of the North Eveleigh site do not have the potential to contain Aboriginal archaeological remains and do not require any further archaeological investigation.

The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council would like to see the Aboriginal history of the North Eveleigh site, which included a number of Aboriginal workers in the railyards complex, documented so that it can be used to interpret the site during any future redevelopment. This should include oral histories as well as historical research. The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council would like to be involved in this research and would be an appropriate place for the research to commence as a number of members have family members who have associations with the railyards. The railyards played an important role in the development of the Redfern Aboriginal community and should be appropriately commemorated.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Allen Madden
Cultural & Education Officer