

Mt Piper Power Station Extension

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER 7 – CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACTS

■ September 2009



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7. Cultural Heritage Impacts

The Director-General's requirements

The Environmental Assessment must include sufficient information to demonstrate the likely impacts on Aboriginal heritage values/items (archaeological and cultural) and proposed mitigation measures consistent with the Draft Guidelines for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and Community Consultation (DEC, 2005). The Environmental Assessment must demonstrate effective consultation with Aboriginal communities has been undertaken in determining and assessing impacts and mitigation measures.

7.1 Assessment Approach

The heritage assessment comprised:

- A literature and database review;
- An archaeological survey aimed to identify material evidence of Aboriginal occupation and areas of archaeological potential.

The study results are described in detail in **Appendix C**.

The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the DECC *Interim Guidelines for Aboriginal Community Consultation*. A public notice was published in The Lithgow Mercury on 18 July 2009. Letters were sent to:

- Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council (BLALC);
- the Office of the Registrar Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983;
- NSW Native Title Services;
- NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (now the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water) (DECCW);
- Lithgow City Council.

Responses were received from all agencies above, except the NSW Native Title Services. A methodology and an invitation to provide a written report providing their views and assessment of the Aboriginal cultural values of the study area were also sent to BLALC.

The DECCW provided a list of known Aboriginal parties likely to have an interest in the project (**Appendix C**), and a letter was sent to each of the listed groups. Responses were received from:

- Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Inc;
- Wiradjuri Traditional Owners Central West Aboriginal Corporation;

- Dhuuluu-Yala Aboriginal Corporation; and
- Two individuals.

The methodology and invitation to provide a written report providing their views and assessment of the Aboriginal cultural values of the study area was sent to each of the above groups.

7.2 Existing Environment

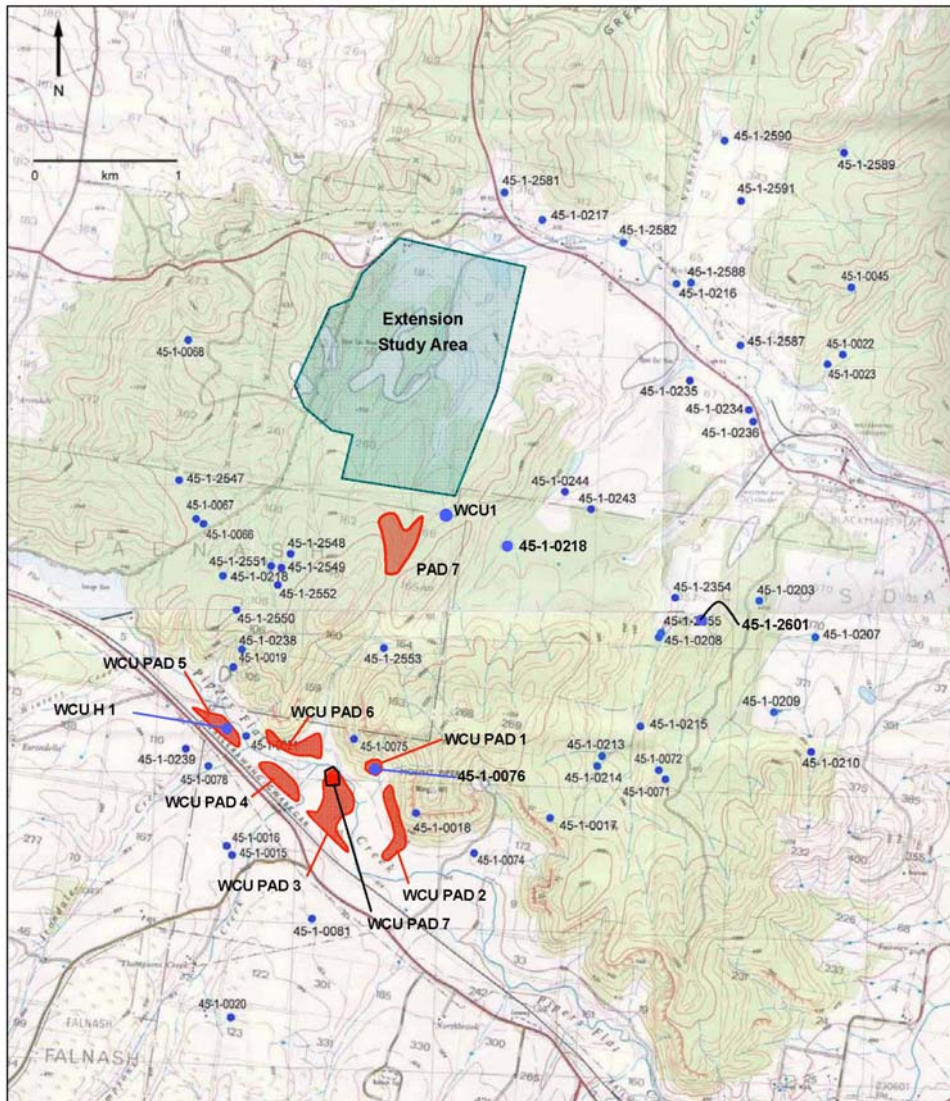
7.2.1 Archaeological Context

The study area is located near the eastern margin of Wiradjuri tribal land, one of the largest in Australia, and encompassing much of the central western region of NSW (Tindale, 1974). Early explorers noted the presence of Aboriginal people throughout the Blue Mountains by the fires apparently deliberately lit across the area (Gorecki 1982). Ethnographic and archaeological evidence indicates that a small population inhabited the high plateaux, probably during the warmer months of the year, for at least 12,000 years.

There has been extensive archaeological research undertaken in the western Blue Mountains including survey and excavation of open sites, rock shelter deposits and recording of rock art, chiefly in association with rock shelters.

Survey of open sites in the Blue Mountains has identified sparse, low density surface scatters with quartz as the predominant raw material. These sites were often located on elevated ground above swamps or permanent streams (Barton and McDonald 1994).

A search of the DECCW Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) revealed a concentration of sites on elevated ground to the south and south-east of the Mount Piper Power Station, and in close proximity to Thompsons Creek to the south, and Neubecks Creek to the north of the power station area (refer to **Figure 7-1**). No Aboriginal sites have previously been recorded or listed as occurring within the Mt Piper Power Station Extension study area.



■ **Figure 7-1 Locations of registered Aboriginal sites in the study area**

7.2.2 Historical Context

European settlement in the Wallerawang area commenced in the 1820s when James Walker was granted over a million acres of land which consequently formed the basis of the present Wallerawang township. Since then, the valley floors bordered by the Coxs River, and Pipers and Neubecks Creeks have been used for agricultural purposes. The coal and lime industries thrived in the region during the mid to late nineteenth century, making the most of the rich geological resources of the Illawarra Coal Measures (Lithgow City Council, 2001). Between 1870 and 1905, collieries were established at Pipers Mount, Blackmans Flat, Lidsdale, Wallerawang and Angus Place, generally following the railway line (Brown 1989). In 1940, the Commonwealth Colliery near Wallerawang became the first open cut colliery in NSW.

The site now occupied by the Mt Piper Power Station was once a series of open cut mine pits. Construction of the power station commenced in 1992. Following construction of a conveyor belt between the Springvale Coal Mine and Mt Piper in 1992, and construction of the Thompsons Creek Dam to supply water to Mt Piper in 1993, the power station became operational in 1993-1994.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the study area was used for pastoral purposes, while the area to the north was reserved for timber growing. In the 1920s and 1930s, the surrounding land was used for coal mining activity, with a number of open cut mines developed in and around the study area.

A search of the NSW State Heritage Inventory, Australian Heritage Database, and the Lithgow City Local Environment Plan 1994 indicates that no previously recorded European sites or objects are located within the study area.

7.3 Impact Assessment

Surveys of the study area were undertaken in 2007 and in August 2009. No Aboriginal sites, objects or potential archaeological deposits (PADs) were located during the field inspections. No historic sites or features were identified during the field inspections.

Surface inspection confirmed that the majority of the study area was highly disturbed. The most likely reason for the lack of archaeological material is the highly disturbed nature of the landscape within the main power station area. This is due both to earthworks and construction associated with the power station and open cut mining activity undertaken across much of the area prior utilisation of the area as a power station. Most of the landscape within the existing power station perimeter, including the areas that will be impacted by the power station extension, has been heavily disturbed and reworked as a result of mining and construction activity up to the present.

The effectiveness of archaeological field survey is to a large degree related to the obtrusiveness of the sites being looked for, and the incidence and quality of ground surface visibility. A total of 75% of the ground area in the study area was inspected during the survey, with 65% providing useable archaeological exposures.

Taking into account survey coverage, archaeologically useable exposures, and visibility variables, the effective survey coverage (ESC) was 39.4% of the total survey area (refer to **Appendix C** for further details). The ESC attempts to provide an estimate of the proportion of the total study area that provided a net 100% level of ground surface visibility to archaeological surveyors.

7.4 Mitigation Measures

From the heritage assessment, it has been determined that development within the Mt Piper study area may proceed without the requirement for further Aboriginal or European heritage archaeological assessments of the area. No sites or PADs were recorded in the area proposed for development and none is likely to be found during construction works. Consequently no mitigation measures are required.