

This document introduces Aboriginal cultural heritage and explains why and how the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been developed.

What is Aboriginal Cultural Heritage?

Aboriginal cultural heritage is a living heritage and one of the most ancient living cultures around the world. Aboriginal cultural heritage includes tangible sites: things we can touch and see, such as stone artefacts, rock shelters, grinding grooves, middens, and scarred trees. But it also includes the intangible: the stories, knowledge, and practices shared and passed down by Aboriginal families, generation to generation through the millennia.

Locally, within Coffs Harbour, one Elder describes Aboriginal cultural heritage and its meaning. Aboriginal people believe they have occupied their land since the Dreaming, and stories of the Dreaming show the link between land and people. As Uncle Tony Perkins explains, cultural property and places are the "middle of a spiritual connection to Aboriginal culture. for thousands of years, we have had these areas, on beaches, on headlands. You may not necessarily see them, but that's why the word 'spiritual' is alive and well 'cause that's part of our culture" Arrawarra Sharing Culture, 2009: Fact Sheet 1.

Aboriginal cultural heritage is not confined to sites. It also includes peoples' memories, storylines, ceremonies, language and 'ways of doing things' that continue to enrich local knowledge about the cultural landscape. It involves teaching and educating younger generations. It is also about learning and looking after cultural traditions and places and passing on knowledge. It is enduring but also changing. It is ancient but also new.



Shell midden remnants
Source: Virtus Heritage



Boambee Beach
Source: Virtus Heritage



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Why did we prepare the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan?

The local Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal community have been advocating for the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage for many years. The City of Coffs Harbour (the City) in consultation with the local Aboriginal community has prepared this [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan](#) (Management Plan) to promote awareness and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage. While the City has committed to positively and proactively managing the growth of Coffs Harbour, it also holds an important role in managing potential impacts to heritage objects and places in the local government area. The City fulfils this role through the preparation of local environmental plans, development control plans, strategic planning projects, heritage management plans, development assessment and ongoing promotion and education.

The legislative protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is not new. The National Parks and Wildlife Act (NPW Act), 1974 provides specific protection for Aboriginal objects and places by making it an offense to 'harm' them. Harm includes to *'destroy, deface or damage an Aboriginal object or Aboriginal Place, and in relation to an object, move the object from the land on which it has been situated'*. The NPW Act is supported by guidelines and processes to manage any potential impact or harm.

The [Management Plan](#) does not replace the provisions of the NPW Act. Instead, the [Management Plan](#) identifies where there is known Aboriginal cultural heritage and where there is a high potential for Aboriginal cultural heritage in order to assist landowners, applicants and developers understand their risk of harm, their legislative obligations and to clarify the level of assessment required with any development proposal that will result in potential ground disturbance.

Clear, easy to understand pathways are outlined in the [Management Plan](#) to ensure that individuals have the right tools and information to meet their obligations under the law and to enable cultural heritage to be properly managed. The pathways have been created to suit the level of assessment that may be required, based on whether Aboriginal cultural heritage is known or predicted as well as its sensitivity.



Left: Coffs Harbour from Sealey Lookout
Source: Virtus Heritage

Above: Headland
Source: Virtus Heritage



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How did we prepare the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan?

The [Management Plan](#) was prepared by the City of Coffs Harbour and consultants Virtus Heritage. The [Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map](#), which accompanies the [Management Plan](#) was prepared by the (former) NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (Biodiversity and Conservation Division), with funding provided by The City of Coffs Harbour.

The development of the plan has been guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between the City, the NSW Government and the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council (Land Council). The plan has been developed in detail through a Project Working Group that has included representatives from the the City, the NSW Government, the Land Council, Elders groups and Gumbaynggirr Cultural Knowledge Holders.

The [Management Plan](#) draws this history and mapping information together and outlines the assessment and management requirements for the mapped areas.



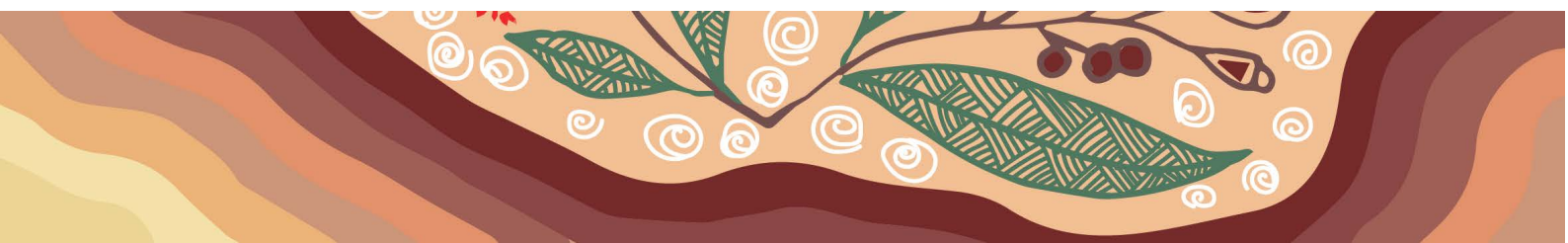
Shell midden remnants, Moonee Beach
Source: Virtus Heritage



Arrawarra Fish Traps
Source: NPWS



Split Solitary Island
Source: Virtus Heritage



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What is included in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan?

The draft [Management Plan](#) includes a thematic history, which is presented in three chapters:

- The Beginning - before time;
- Contact and Invasion to pre-1973; and
- 1970s Self-determination to 2019.

These three periods of time are critical periods which shape and transform Gumbaynggirr and historical Aboriginal families' history within the Coffs Harbour region.

The Thematic History is included in Appendix A to the draft [Management Plan](#)

The draft [Management Plan](#) also refers to the [Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map](#), which has been prepared using a methodology to assess known and predictive ACH. This methodology uses an understanding of Aboriginal history, land use and sophisticated resource knowledge, cultural and spiritual practices, patterns of movement and the connection of Aboriginal people with their country.

Further information on the mapping can be found in Part 1 of the draft [Management Plan](#).

The [Management Plan](#) pulls the thematic history and mapping together to provide a picture of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Coffs Harbour local government area, and to assist property owners, land managers, applicants and developers understand the potential risk of harm from certain works. The [Management Plan](#) outlines the actions, processes and procedures required, consistent with legislative requirements, to avoid harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Further information on these processes and requirements can be found in Part 2 Consultation, and Part 3 Planning Assessment Framework, of the [Management Plan](#).

The legislative requirements are outlined in Part 6 Legislation, of the [Management Plan](#).



Hamlet at Red Rock
Source: Virtus Heritage



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What is included on the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map?

Preparation of the [Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map](#) involved the identification and recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage through oral history research and landscape survey. It was developed with extensive consultation and involvement with the local Aboriginal community.

The data and site information gathered during the initial stages of the cultural mapping process was refined into two mapping layers: 'known' Aboriginal cultural heritage (i.e. Aboriginal places of heritage significance) and Predictive Aboriginal cultural heritage. Together, the two spatial layers' form the City's [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map](#).

It is important to note that the two mapping layers: known and predictive Aboriginal cultural heritage are shown on the map at a very broad scale, with a suitable buffer provided to protect the identity of the exact location of cultural heritage material.

Appendix B of the [Management Plan](#) further outlines the cultural mapping methodology and consultation undertaken as part of the mapping process.

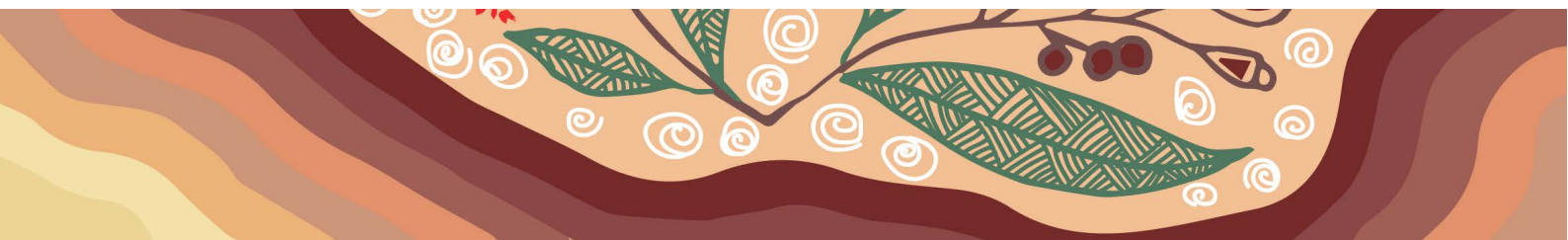
It also should be noted that the City acknowledges that the mapping is dynamic and over time the mapping will need to be updated progressively, as cultural values and knowledge change and new information becomes available. The improvement of the map over time, as new info comes to hand is an action that is supported by the following two 'Big Moves' included within Part 4 of the [Management Plan](#):

1. Incorporate Women's Perspectives

Work with the Land Council, Cultural Knowledge Holders, and Heritage NSW to obtain grant funding to undertake additional consultation with Aboriginal women in the Coffs Harbour LGA to ensure that women's perspectives and cultural heritage are included on the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map.

2. Improve the City's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map

Register additional cultural sites identified as part of the preparation of this Management Plan and include these sites on the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map. In consultation with Cultural Knowledge Holders, update the predictive layer on the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map to include additional data developed as part of Heritage NSW's reform process.



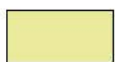
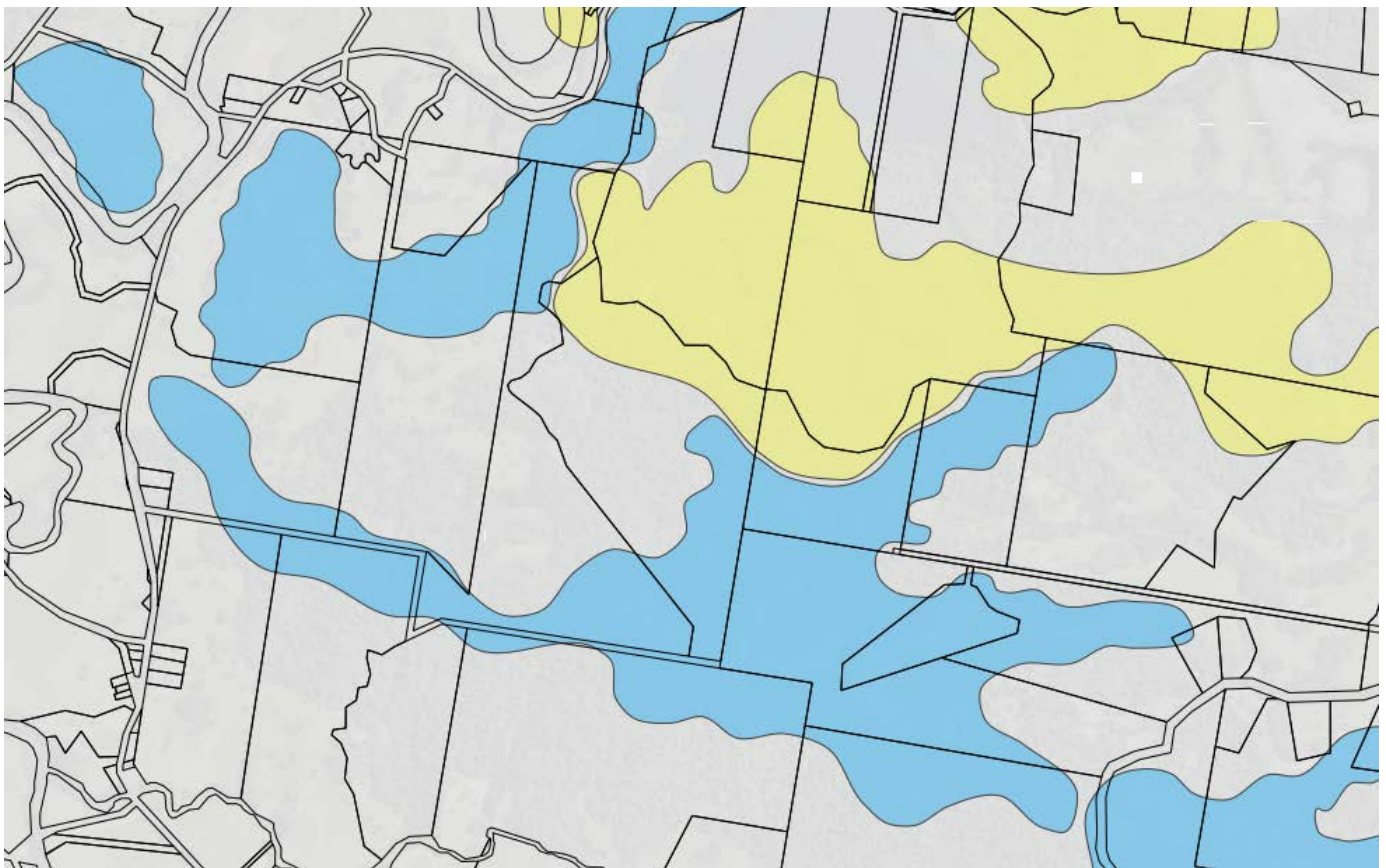
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Known Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Land mapped as 'known' Aboriginal cultural heritage identifies and acknowledges areas of known Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The 'known' mapping layer is comprised of:

- Sites registered on the AHIMS database;
- Sites registered on other heritage databases;
- Sites that have been identified during the preparation of the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Map;
- Sites that have been identified by the Community through knowledge and traditional practices;
- Damaged or destroyed sites in recognition of continued significance to the Aboriginal community.



Known Aboriginal cultural heritage



Predictive Aboriginal Cultural Heritage



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Predictive Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Land mapped as 'predictive' Aboriginal cultural heritage identifies land with a high probability of Aboriginal cultural heritage being present on that land, based on meeting **a minimum of three of the following ten landscape mapping criteria:**

1. Indigenous oral sources and community knowledge - Information provided by Elders and knowledge holders that identifies sites and places.
2. Documented sources - Including historic records and references of a cultural place and/or practice at an identified location.
3. Resource hot spot - the presence of biological and/or geological resources, including stone resources for artefacts or grinding; areas where particular plants grow; within 200m of waters
4. Elevated point for observation - Identified high points in the landscape that are suitable for observation of surrounding land and may provide a point of alignment between known cultural sites and places, such locations are situated on a ridge top, ridge line or headland.
5. Suitability for open campsite - Important considerations for open campsites include aspect, level terrain, ridge line plateaus or saddles, proximity to a source of fresh water (especially springs), and proximity to a particular food resource.
6. Nomination of traditional preferred access route - Identification of a preferred pathway for movement, often along a ridge top, ridge line, or adjacent to watercourses.
7. Location for specific cultural practice - Locations with a higher probability for a specific cultural practice (e.g. ceremony, visitation etc.) due to relationships with particular topographic or landscape features.
8. Proximity to a known cultural site - Strategic proximity to known cultural sites, for example, the nearby presence of recorded sites from the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System.
9. Presence of unique landforms - Features such as an escarpment, cave, rock shelter, waterhole, waterfall, water source, or geologic outcrop, above, below, or around the feature.
10. Cultural use of ancient landscapes - Different climatic conditions in the past formed landscapes which can be identified as old stream channels, oxbow lakes, lagoons, swamps, or ancient sand dune systems resulting from sea level changes and coastal realignment.

The mapping methodology is further described in Appendix B of the [Management Plan](#).

Unmapped Land

It is important to note that an unmapped area does not automatically mean there is no presence of Aboriginal cultural heritage as the potential for Aboriginal cultural heritage remains and the legislated provisions of a cultural assessment may still apply. If land that is unmapped is earmarked for development, the provisions of the Due Diligence Code of Practice still apply.

