



## FACT SHEET

# Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment

EnergyAustralia acknowledges that the site of the proposed Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro project is on the traditional Country of the Wiradjuri People. We recognise their continued connection to land, waterways and community, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

## About the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project

EnergyAustralia is investigating the feasibility of a pumped hydro energy storage project on land it owns near Lithgow in New South Wales. The project would use water from Lake Lyell, originally built to support surrounding power stations, and existing transmission infrastructure. It would also involve a new purpose-built upper reservoir on nearby Mount Walker to operate a utility-scale energy storage facility. The project has a proposed capacity of 335 megawatts for up to eight hours, with flexible capacity of more than 400 megawatts for a shorter duration, providing energy for at least 150,000 homes<sup>1</sup>.



Proposed capacity

**335MW**



Energy for homes

**150,000<sup>1</sup>**



Storage duration

**8 hours**

## What is an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment?

EnergyAustralia has engaged EMM Consulting Pty Ltd (EMM) to undertake Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project's Environmental Impact Statement, which identifies environment issues and concerns for consideration by the project and consent authorities. As part of this process, an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment is being conducted to understand, characterise, and assess the cultural heritage across the project area.

The focus of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment is on the areas of Lake Lyell and Mt Walker where EnergyAustralia proposes to build the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project.

The assessment involves members of the local Aboriginal community, who are working with EMM to thoroughly examine and evaluate the area's cultural and archaeological values. Their valuable insights and advice will result in recommendations to minimise impacts, to protect, and to conserve identified cultural heritage.

## Aboriginal consultation

Local Aboriginal organisations and individuals play a key role in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment. A process was undertaken to identify local Aboriginal individuals and organisations, as well as Elders and knowledge-holders who could assist with the investigations.

**Overall, some 22 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are being actively consulted as part of the assessment process.**

This includes a range of locally-based Wiradjuri Traditional Owners, the local Aboriginal land council, and several Aboriginal individuals and organisations more regionally-based with an interest in cultural heritage management.

To date, these individuals and organisations have been involved in a range of assessment activities including field surveys conducted in late 2023, an archaeological excavation program in early 2024, and a project-specific exploration of cultural and intangible values within and near the project area.

<sup>1</sup> Based on POE10 demand of 1.97kW for EnergyAustralia's portfolio of NSW residential customers at 335MW of generation.

## Archaeological test excavation

A program of archaeological test excavations was completed with the RAPs. These excavations are dictated by NSW government guidelines and includes small, manually-dug test pits by a team of archaeologists and RAPs. The soil and dirt from each test pit was sieved through a mesh looking for stone artefacts and other material culture. These artefacts were collected by EMM and remain with them temporarily for specialist analysis. During the finalisation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment, EnergyAustralia will discuss with the RAPs the long term repository of the recovered material culture, and implement this process shortly after. This may include re-burial within the project area, which is common, or the deposition at another institution such as a museum or to be held by an Aboriginal community or other party named in a Care Agreement. These three options follow the Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in NSW. Heritage NSW will also review the decision on what happens to the artefacts.

## What's involved?

The following activities have taken place, some are still ongoing, as part of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment:

- Ongoing liaison and consultation with key Aboriginal community members and knowledge-holders, to identify areas and places of cultural value within or in the vicinity of the project area.
- Reviewing of existing environmental, historical, and archaeological information for the project area, by identifying and summarising known and previously recorded Aboriginal heritage places, cultural values areas, and landforms of archaeological interest in its immediate surrounds.
- Cultural values mapping, field survey and archaeological test excavation of key landforms around Farmers Creek to determine the presence and nature of Aboriginal objects, places, cultural values areas, or areas of archaeological potential within the project area.
- Mapping to identify the locations of known and potential Aboriginal sites, objects, and deposits, and cultural values areas.

## Get in touch

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- Assessing the archaeological and cultural significance of the project area.
- Exploring avoidance opportunities to begin to develop mitigation measures where Aboriginal sites, objects and deposits interact with the proposed project activities. These will be further developed with the RAPs in coming months.

## Following best practice

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment is being completed in accordance with relevant guidelines, policies, and industry requirements, including:

- Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in NSW (the Code) (DECCW 2010a)



*An archaeologist uses a sieve to look for evidence of Aboriginal occupation.*

- Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (OEH 2011)
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents (DECCW 2010b)
- Several Commonwealth and state Acts (and associated regulations) that manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

## What happens next?

Once the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment report is developed, it will be provided to the registered Aboriginal parties for their input, comment, and review. This report will then be included in the project's Environmental Impact Statement which the wider community will be able to read and comment on as part of the planning approval process.

