

# Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management

Energy Australia 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 progressing with the development of a pumped hydro energy storage project on land and waterways we own near Lithgow. The project would use water from Lake Lyell, originally built to support surrounding power stations, and existing transmission infrastructure. It would involve a new purpose-built upper reservoir on nearby Mount Walker to operate a utility-scale energy storage facility.

The project has an optimised capacity of 385 megawatts for up to eight hours, with flexible capacity for more than 400 megawatts for a shorter duration, providing energy for at least 150,000 homes.

The NSW Government has declared the project as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI), highlighting its importance as essential, high-priority infrastructure for the state.

With CSSI status, the project will still undergo extensive investigative work and technical studies as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completed in 2025.

Wiradjuri peoples have held a deep connection to Country for thousands of years.

Cultural heritage provides essential links between the past and present – it is an essential part of Wiradjuri people's cultural identity, connection and sense of belonging to Country.

Artefacts such as tools, weapons, clothing and artworks are created with deep symbolism and meaning, reflecting a profound understanding of land, animals, water and sky.

Artefact discoveries increase our collective and shared understanding of how Wiradjuri people used the area of Lake Lyell and Mt Walker where EnergyAustralia proposes to build the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project.

The Project created the opportunity to make artefact findings in an unexplored area by applying a formal *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment* (Assessment) to the site.

Ensuring Wiradjuri cultural heritage is recorded and managed is an important part of the development of the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project.

## Ongoing participation

It is crucial that the local Aboriginal community is involved in investigating, assessing and managing cultural heritage. An assessment study is richer with local perspectives and cultural knowledge that is shared as sites are investigated, discoveries assessed, and arrangements made for the safe keeping of artefacts.

EnergyAustralia, through the independent consultants EMM Consulting Pty Ltd (EMM), undertook a process to identify local Aboriginal individuals and organisations, as well as Elders and knowledge-holders who could assist with the investigations.

Through this process, 22 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) became actively involved in the assessment process in line with Heritage NSW Code of Practice.

This has included locally based Wiradjuri Traditional Owners, the local Aboriginal land council, and several individuals and organisations more regionally based with an interest in cultural heritage management.



## Investigating cultural heritage

An investigation requires a broader focus than objects or places. It must uncover knowledge about their context as objects and places in a landscape do not exist in isolation. RAPs participated in a field survey in late 2023, sharing knowledge and providing insights to put objects and places into a context that revealed meaning and significance.

## Assessing places

Assessing the cultural significance of a place means defining the reasons why a place is culturally important. It involves two main steps: (1) identifying the range of values present across a study area; (2) assessing why they are important. RAPs undertook cultural values mapping to help identify which places are culturally significant and why which helps inform decisions about managing these specific places.

## Discoveries

Small, manually dug tests pits were created by RAPs and a team of archaeologists. The soil and dirt from each test pit were sieved through a mesh looking for cultural material. 1,344 stone artefacts were discovered with RAPs providing initial insight into their cultural significance onsite. Then, in accordance with the Heritage NSW Code of Practice and consultation with RAPs, the stone artefacts were entrusted temporarily to archaeologists and specialists for further analysis at their Sydney office.



## Assessing and analysing objects

Assessing the cultural significance of objects means understanding how artefacts are linked to ceremonies, traditions and ancestral practices that have been passed down through generations. It also means examining the craftsmanship and materials used to create artefacts. Each artefact is photographed and catalogued describing their cultural value. Assessing objects in this way helps to preserve and protect their cultural importance, ensuring they are respected and understood in their cultural context.

## Temporary safe keeping

When the object assessment and analysis was completed, arrangements could be made for temporary safe keeping on Wiradjuri Country, in accordance with Heritage NSW Code of Practice and in consultation with the RAPs. A temporary secure storage location was agreed and the artefacts brought home to Wiradjuri Country.



Discussions with RAPs are ongoing to agree a permanent location for the artefacts that depends on different project outcomes.

## Reporting on cultural heritage

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Report is a written report documenting the process of investigation, consultation and assessment. The Report will be provided to the RAPs 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 approval process.

## Developing measures to avoid, mitigate and manage

Should the project be approved, EnergyAustralia will be required to complete a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) with the RAPs. The CHMP is an agreement that sets out mitigation measures for places and objects that interact with the proposed project.

## Learn more:



EnergyAustralia –  
Innovate  
Reconciliation  
Action Plan





Wiradjuri  
Dictionary



Heritage NSW –  
Aboriginal Cultural  
Heritage Advisory –  
Cultural Protocols

## Get in touch:

 [community@EnergyAustralia.com.au](mailto:community@EnergyAustralia.com.au)

 1800 574 947

 EnergyAustralia Project HQ, 124 Main St, Lithgow  
[lakelyellpumpedhydro.com.au](http://lakelyellpumpedhydro.com.au)