

PORT OF AIRLIE MARINA DEVELOPMENT

18. Cultural Heritage

18.1 Existing Conditions

An assessment of Indigenous and European Cultural Heritage was undertaken by Northern Archaeology Consultancies Pty Ltd in June-October 1998, as part of the 1998 Port of Airlie Draft Impact Assessment Study (IAS) (Burchill 1998).

To update the consultation process with Traditional Owners some further meetings were undertaken in October-November 2002 to discuss the revised Port of Airlie Proposal and to identify any concerns not already raised in the 1998 IAS (Burchill 1998).

The Boathaven Bay area (known to local Indigenous people as Muddy Bay) is part of the traditional home lands of the Gia/Ngaro people who were coastal and island dwellers, well adapted to the maritime environment. The Gia/Ngaro people were displaced and dispersed by European settlement of the Whitsunday area. European settlement of the Airlie Beach area first occurred in 1904. The area remained largely rural until the early 1960s when visitor levels increased and associated tourism industries were created.

The 1998 cultural heritage assessment included the following:

- ❑ Review of existing information on Indigenous and European cultural heritage in the study area
- ❑ Detailed field investigations of the shores and intertidal flats of Boathaven Bay. Representatives from the Gudjuda Reference Group and the Southern Birri Gubba Reference Group accompanied archaeologists in field investigations.
- ❑ Conduct of meetings with representatives of each Reference Group. Oral histories were recorded during these meetings.

No archaeological evidence for Indigenous or European cultural heritage sites was identified during the study. This was not entirely unexpected, given the very high degree of previous development along the coastline (including reclamation of land) and the fact that the study area was subject to inundation at high tide and more intense disturbance during storms and cyclones. The potential that intact archaeological sites might remain undiscovered in the study area was predicted as low.

Consultation with the Traditional Owners revealed that Pioneer Bay was used by Aboriginal people for fishing, gathering and hunting of marine and terrestrial resources. It was noted that food sources in Pioneer Bay had been depleted by recent and intensive development of the area. A number of informants reported that they regularly visit Pioneer Bay and Boathaven Bay. To Indigenous people, Boathaven Bay is recognised as an integral part of the broad cultural landscape of Gia/ Ngaro homelands.

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18.2 Potential Impacts on Cultural Heritage

The current proposal for the Port of Airlie development lies completely within the study area investigated in the 1998 IAS (Burchill 1998). On this basis, it is not expected that the proposal will impact on any sites or artefacts of cultural heritage significance.

The potential always exists to uncover previously unknown sites or artefacts during excavations in the construction stage.

In addition, the development is occurring within an area which the Traditional Owners have ongoing associations and the proposed development will alter the nature of these associations.

18.3 Recommendations

The recent consultation process has included discussions with the Gudjuda Reference Group and representatives of the Gia Traditional Owners and Native Title applicants. It is noted that the Southern Birri Gubba Reference Group (originally consulted as part of the 1998 cultural heritage study) no longer exists.

As a means to update consultation, Traditional Owner representatives have been provided with maps and development plans showing the revised 2002 Port of Airlie proposal. A copy of the 1998 Cultural Heritage Assessment Report has been provided to key Traditional Owner spokespersons. These representatives are currently reviewing the recommendations of the 1998 study and will provide feedback on any amendments that may be required to the 1998 project recommendations. Feedback was not forthcoming at the time of writing.

At the request of the Gudjuda Reference Group, Northern Archaeology Consultancies has made a recent inspection of the proposed development area at Boathaven Bay, in conjunction with the Reference Group's Cultural Development Officer and a member of the Board of Directors.

The Gudjuda Reference Group has requested that Northern Archaeology Consultancies attend a meeting with their Board of Directors on 16 November 2002 to appraise them of the revised Port of Airlie project and to discuss relevant cultural heritage matters. Their feedback will be provided at this meeting. It is noted that this process is part of the standard protocol in consulting with the Gudjuda Reference Group for cultural heritage assessment studies.

The following recommendations are based on those formulated in the 1998 IAS (Burchill 1998), which were developed in consultation with Traditional Owners:-

- Nominated Traditional Owner representatives should be provided with the opportunity to conduct site inspections during the construction phase. These site inspections are intended to maintain communication between the proponent and Traditional Owner representatives, as well as to allow inspection of areas of excavation where archaeological evidence may be exposed.

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- ❑ In the event that any suspected evidence of cultural heritage remains are detected in surface or sub-surface deposits during any stage of the project, activities at this location should be halted and contact made with Traditional Owner representatives and the Regional Manager, Cultural Heritage Branch, Environmental Protection Agency. In the event that any finds of cultural heritage significance are made, the appropriate management and mitigation strategy is to be determined in consultation with Traditional Owners and the Regional Archaeologist, EPA.
- ❑ Copies of the Supplementary EIS be forwarded to Traditional Owners for review.
- ❑ Ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners be maintained for the duration of construction.
- ❑ If requested by Traditional Owners, information on cultural heritage of the Whitsunday area be incorporated into any interpretive material provided at the Port of Airlie

A formal Cultural Heritage Management Plan will not be developed for this project on the basis that no significant archaeological or cultural heritage sites have been identified in the study area. However, the above recommendations will be incorporated into the Environmental Management Plans for design, construction and operation to ensure that they are implemented in an appropriate manner.

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