

T06-1148

Additional Archaeological Survey of Proposed Gravel & Fill Extraction Areas west of the Stokes Range, Victoria Highway

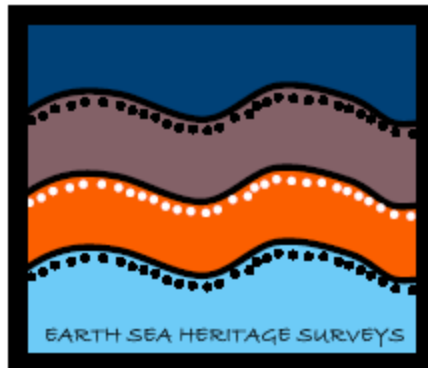
Prepared for:

**Construction Division,
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
Northern Territory Government.**

by

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Executive Summary

Earth Sea Heritage Surveys were engaged by the Construction Division of the NT Department of Infrastructure and Planning to conduct an archaeological survey of a gravel and fill extraction area along the Victoria Highway. This archaeological survey is an addendum to archaeological surveys carried out for environmental reporting for the Victoria Highway and bridge upgrade project as per the *Northern Territory Environmental Assessment Act 1994*. The results of this archaeological survey are consistent with the archaeological risk management model proposed by Guse and Woolfe (2006) developed to aid future planning for the gravel extraction and road development.

One archaeological site (Billycan Trap Yard Site 1) and three background scatters of isolated artefacts were recorded within the proposed gravel and fill extraction area.

The archaeological site (Billycan Trap Yard Site 1) has a moderate level of archaeological and heritage significance. The background scatters have a low level of archaeological significance.

Impacts on the archaeological materials can be mitigated by implementing the recommendations detailed in this report. It is recommended that an exclusion zone is implemented along the creek zone and around Billycan Trap Yard Site 1 to avoid impacts to archaeological places and objects protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act 1991*. The majority of the proposed gravel extraction area will not be affected by the proposed exclusion zones and gravel extraction activities will still be able to proceed.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The Construction Division, Department of Planning and Infrastructure have contracted Earth Sea Heritage Surveys to undertake an archaeological survey of a gravel and fill extraction area along the Victoria Highway, Northern Territory. The area to be surveyed is defined by a polygon according to the waypoints supplied and maps shown in Figures 1 and 2 in an area situated approximately 5 km due south of the Victoria Highway from a point marked by the intersection of the Coolibah Homestead access road. The gravel and fill extraction area is defined by a cluster of waypoints, the outline perimeter of which determines the boundary for the archaeological survey. The total survey area is approximately 2.96km² in area, although the main areas for gravel extraction are significantly less.

The aim of the survey was to locate and record any prescribed archaeological objects or places as defined under the Northern Territory of Australia *Heritage Conservation Act* 1991. If located, the survey aimed to assess the nature, distribution and significance of these materials within the area to be impacted.

This report details the physical and cultural environment of the study area on Fitzroy Station. It notes the current land use and any available information of past land uses particularly by Aboriginal people. The report also briefly describes the ethnographic and ethno-historical information available on the area as well as the previous archaeological work undertaken in the region. This report contains the archaeological site and background scatter descriptions recorded during the survey. The final part of this report is a section on general cultural heritage recommendations.

The brief also required recommendations regarding mitigative procedures where appropriate, and the formulation of short and long term management strategies for any materials located in the proposed development area if necessary.

The archaeological survey of the proposed Victoria Highway gravel and fill extraction area was conducted in November 2006 by Daryl Guse.

1.2. Scope of the Study

The archaeological study will:

- Identify archaeological material (prescribed archaeological places and objects) within the proposed development areas by means of a survey. Archaeological sites are to be recorded in such detail as to permit independent assessment of their significance. Location of archaeological places and objects were recorded using Global Positioning System¹.

¹ The survey datum was GDA94, the map grid MGA94. In the Northern Territory, this is within 1 metre of WGS 84.

- Test previous archaeological site location models and evidence from previous archaeological surveys.
- Assess the cultural heritage significance of archaeological places and objects located during the survey.
- The consultant will make recommendations to ensure compliance with the Northern Territory *Heritage Conservation Act* and its Regulations and other relevant cultural heritage legislation.

1.3. Legislative Basis for Cultural Heritage Protection

Cultural heritage in the Northern Territory is protected via several different legislative mechanisms. Protected cultural heritage places can be divided into three main areas which are listed below with Northern Territory legislation that is relevant to the development area.

Table 1. Legislative basis for protection of Indigenous cultural heritage places

Type of Cultural Heritage Place	Relevant Legislation
1. Sites of significance according to Aboriginal Tradition	<i>Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989</i> ; <i>Aboriginal Land (Northern Territory) Rights Act 1976</i>
2. Aboriginal archaeological places and objects	<i>Heritage Conservation Act 1991</i>
3. Declared Heritage Places	<i>Heritage Conservation Act 1991</i>

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) administers the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* the aim of which is the protection and prevention of the desecration of sacred sites in the Northern Territory and the provision of a clearance mechanism for Government and industry. The AAPA does this through a site registration and Authority Certificate process.

Indigenous archaeological sites are protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act* as 'archaeological places and objects'. The *Heritage Conservation Act* includes sacred objects as archaeological objects for the purposes of the Act. These types of places and objects are afforded automatic protection under the *Heritage Conservation Act* until the Minister makes a decision under Section 26 of that Act that either the place meets the heritage assessment criteria and should be permanently protected, or the places is not significant, and can be disturbed in the course of development or works. The Office of Environment and Heritage is the primary statutory agency for the conservation and protection of these sites.

The *Heritage Conservation Act* provides for the nomination and declaration of places and objects as 'Heritage Places' if they are significant to the Northern Territory. There are criteria that are to be applied to such places to assess whether they meet a sufficient level of heritage significance.

1.4. Victoria River Region

The road reserve is now fenced for the greater part of the Highway limiting access by stock from the adjoining pastoral leases. Some of the areas near the creek crossings are used by local Aboriginal people and tourists as a stop over point. Following the gazettal of Gregory National Park, the economy and land use of the Victoria River district is now dominated by tourism. Pastoralism is still an important industry, as is the growing importance of the Defence Force use of the Bradshaw Field Training Area.

The area of study was located within Fitzroy Station and has pastoral industry infrastructure constructed in the area. A major bore and a number of fence lines traverse the nearby area. The proposed gravel and fill extraction area has previously been utilised for gravel extraction. However, on the whole, the area has mainly been impacted by pastoral activities.

1.5. Consultation with Traditional Owners

Consultations regarding sites of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, otherwise known as sacred sites, are normally undertaken in accordance with the Northern Territory *Sacred Sites Act 1989* by the relevant statutory agency, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. The Authority has a Certificate process that provides proponents and landowners a statutory certificate with regards to sacred sites.

Under the Northern Territory legislative framework, there is no statutory requirement for consultation about archaeological sites unless permits to disturb such sites are required². In this case, the Heritage Advisory Council Archaeological Sub-Committee forwards these permit applications to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority for comment. The Road Projects Division has begun the processes of consultation through the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority to seek Authority Certificates for the project area and with the Northern Land Council over areas subject to Native Title.

In this case, consultations are being conducted by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure with the traditional owners of the land and representatives of the Northern Land Council which has led to the location of the proposed gravel and fill extraction area.

² However, Earth Sea Heritage Surveys adopts the policy of the Australian Archaeological Association in this matter. This policy consists of consulting with Aboriginal people where-ever and when-ever possible on matters pertaining to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Figure 1: Map provided by DPI showing the location of the proposed gravel and fill extraction areas

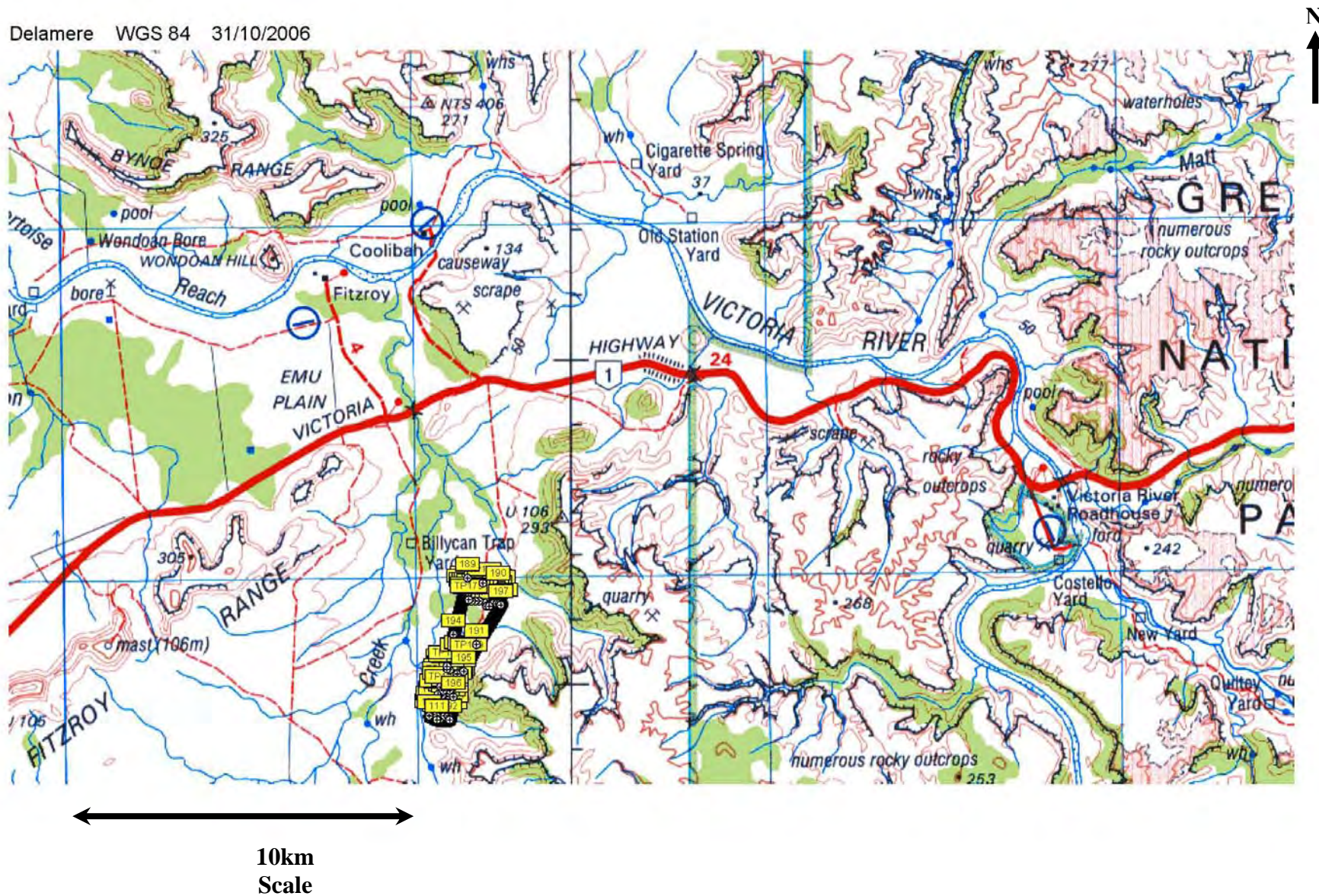


Figure 2. Map provided by DPI illustrating the proposed gravel and fill extraction area for archaeological survey along with waypoints

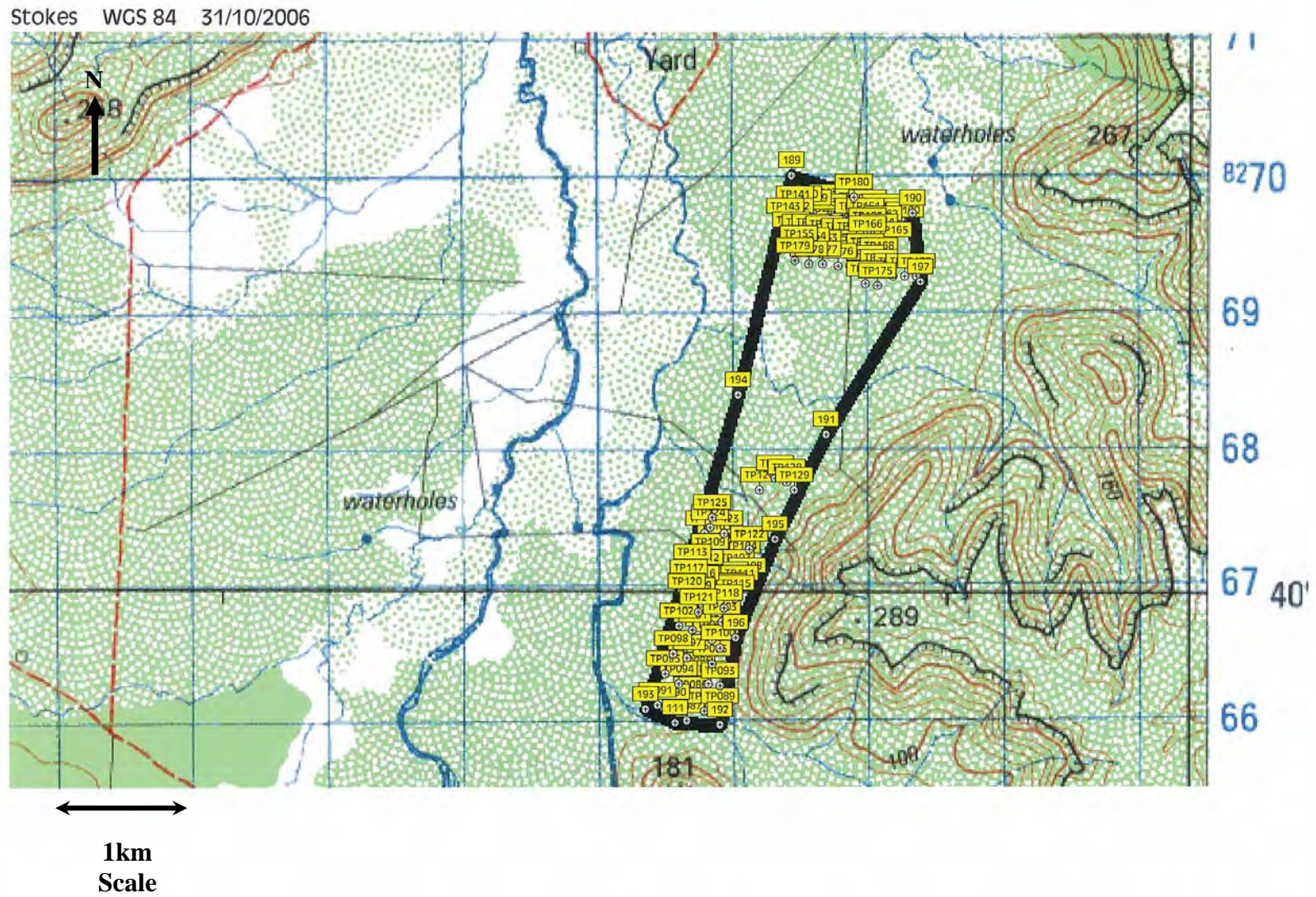



Figure 3. Environment of the gravel and fill extraction area



View of the sandstone escarpment and rocky terrain

Sparse open woodland of northern part of study area

Rocky creek at the southern end of the study area

Project: Archaeological survey of additional gravel search areas for the Victoria Highway
Environment Photographs of Gravel Search Area
Earth Sea Heritage Surveys

