

PROGRESS UPDATE

VICTORIAN NORTHERN INTERCONNECT EXPANSION PROJECT (BROADFORD TO MANGALORE GAS PIPELINE – LOOP 6) - CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN #13233

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) 13233 has been commissioned by APA VTS Australia (Operations) Pty Ltd to mitigate Aboriginal cultural heritage issues for the Broadford to Mangalore (Loop 6) section of the Victorian Northern Interconnect Expansion Project. This project involves the installation of approximately 29.1 kilometres of underground gas pipeline as well as the construction of associated facilities, such as access tracks and the creation of temporary sites for the accommodation of specialised equipment such as the machinery used for Horizontal Directional Drilling, storage or equipment lay-down areas and turnaround bays (referred to as the 'proposed activity'). The majority of the area within which works will occur (referred to as the 'activity area') is within the existing Wollert to Wodonga gas transmission pipeline easement (PL101) but some minor works will occur outside this alignment on freehold property, a small section of Crown land adjacent to the Goulburn River, sections of a number of road reserves and a railway track reserve.

Preparation of this CHMP is a mandatory requirement under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* ('the Act') because part of the activity area is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity (as defined in the Regulations 22 and 23 to the Act) and the proposed activity is a high impact activity (Regulation 43(1xx11B)). In addition, some of the proposed works will potentially impact upon known Aboriginal heritage and therefore the harm provisions (Sections 27 and 28) of the Act are relevant. A CHMP is also required for activities where an earth resource authorisation is required and that resource authorisation includes (Section.50 (d)) 'the acceptance under Division 3 of Part 9 of the *Pipelines Act 2005* of an Environmental Management Plan'. Where this is the case, all authorisations must be suspended until the required CHMP has been prepared and approved.

The Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC) is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the region in which the activity area is located. From 24 June 2015, the TCAC were engaged directly by the Sponsor to oversee all cultural heritage investigations undertaken during the preparation of CHMP 13233, with Trish Terry, Co-Chairperson of the TCAC, serving as Cultural Heritage Advisor. Representatives of the TCAC were actively engaged in all aspects of the preparation of this CHMP and participated in the fieldwork.

CHMP 13233 includes three levels of Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment: a Desktop Assessment, Standard Assessment and Complex Assessment. The Desktop Assessment and the fieldwork for the Standard and Complex Assessments have now been completed and the results of the fieldwork are currently being analysed and written-up for inclusion within the CHMP document.

RESULTS OF THE DESKTOP ASSESSMENT

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) was accessed on 3 October 2014, 7 May 2015 and 22 October 2015 to determine the nature and extent of any Aboriginal cultural heritage places that had previously been recorded in the vicinity of the activity area. This search revealed that one known Aboriginal cultural heritage place (VAHR 7923-0204), comprising two quartz artefacts that were recovered from sub-surface deposits during archaeological excavations undertaken at this location, is within the activity area and a further seven places are within 100 metres of the activity area boundary and on landforms that extend into the activity area. These results, in combination with a review of the previous archaeological reports that had been prepared for the general region within which the activity are is located, available ethno-historic and historical information, data on landforms, geomorphology and geology, flora and fauna assessments and past land use details, were used to develop a predictive model for the location of Aboriginal cultural heritage places and areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity within the activity area. This model indicated that the activity area contains a number of landforms that are likely to be sensitive for the identification of Aboriginal cultural materials, including floodplains and terraces adjacent to watercourses and ridges, spurs, crest and isolated flatter areas within the hiller sections.

RESULTS OF THE STANDARD ASSESSMENT

The Standard Assessment took place over four days (29-30 June and 1-2 July 2015) and included a pedestrian survey of the entire activity area. Present during this survey were Mark Grist (archaeologist), Rodney Monk, Shane Monk and Dylan Wilkinson (representing the TCAC) and Adam Dean (Excavator Driver).

During the Standard Assessment 25 surface Aboriginal stone artefacts were recorded. These were all located in the southern section of the activity area in isolated pockets of better visibility and were associated with three of the previously recorded Aboriginal places that are located adjacent to the boundaries of the activity area. 7923-0204, which had previously been recorded within the activity area could not be relocated and no surface artefacts were visible at this location. Surface artefacts were also not found in the vicinity of the four other places located within 100 meters of the boundary of the activity area. However, visibility across most of the activity area was poor due to the dense grass and other vegetation cover and this hindered the ability to see surface stone artefacts. At the conclusion of the Standard Assessment 27 areas of likely Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity were identified within the activity area. These areas of sensitivity were determined on the basis of the presence of surface stone artefacts and/or landforms that the Desktop Assessment concluded were likely to contain Aboriginal cultural materials.

RESULTS OF THE COMPLEX ASSESSMENT

The 27 areas of likely Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity that were identified during the Standard Assessment were targeted for sub-surface testing during the Complex Assessment. In addition, some excavation took place outside these areas to test the null hypothesis. This sub-surface testing occurred in two phases. Analysis of the Aboriginal cultural materials recovered is ongoing but the preliminary results are as follows:

PHASE 1: Controlled hand excavation. As required by the Regulations to the Act (Regulation 61 (4)), the stratigraphy and sub-surface nature of deposits across the variety of landforms present in the activity area was established by controlled hand excavation. This took place over five days and involved two teams comprising Joanna Freslov and Mark Grist (archaeologists) and Peter Moser, Paul Harding, Shane Monk and Angela Moate (representing the TCAC). During this time 12 100x100cm test pits were excavated and approximately 69 artefacts were recovered.

PHASE 2: Mechanical excavation. This took place over approximately 16 weeks and involved two teams, each comprising a rotating roster of archaeologists and TCAC representatives, with a mechanical excavator and sieve unit. The general methodology used during this phase was developed in consultation with the TCAC and was as follows: an excavator was used to scrape back deposits across a 200 x 60 cm area in approximately 10cm layers. A recording form was used to note details on the layer from which any Aboriginal cultural materials were recovered, the stratigraphy of the pit, final depth, pH, soil colour, other features and final depth and all pits sections were drawn and photographed. If a pit contained Aboriginal cultural materials (a positive pit) then further pits were excavated at a distance of ten metres from this pit at the four cardinal points (activity area extent permitting). This continued until a pit that did not contain Aboriginal cultural materials was encountered (a negative pit). Further pits were excavated at a five metre distance from each negative pit to verify that the area did not contain Aboriginal cultural materials. If Aboriginal cultural materials were encountered in any of these pits, then the 10 metre excavation distance was resumed. Where two negative pits were encountered in a row, the excavation moved to a distance of 30 metres for the next pit. During this phase of the Complex Assessment 1165 pits were excavated, 604 of which contained Aboriginal cultural materials and a total of approximately 3890 Aboriginal stone artefacts were recovered.

CONCLUSION

All Aboriginal cultural materials recovered during all phases of the archaeological assessment have been grouped into seven Aboriginal cultural heritage places (six of which are extensions of previously recorded places located in or adjacent to the activity area) and nine Low Density Artefact Scatters (LDADs). The size of these places and LDADs ranges from single artefacts to extensive scatters of over 1500 artefacts extending for almost two kilometres.



The analysis of the data recovered during the Standard and Complex assessments is ongoing, information is currently being compiled that will enable the identified Aboriginal cultural heritage places and LDADs to be registered with OAAV on the VAHR and the CHMP document is being written in anticipation of lodgement with OAAV. OAAV have 30 days to evaluate the CHMP following lodgement.

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