



Environment,  
Climate Change & Water  
National Parks & Wildlife Service



# Wisemans Ferry Historic Site Plan of Management





**WISEMANS FERRY HISTORIC SITE**  
**PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

**Part of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water**

**December 2010**

**This plan of management was adopted by the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010.**

**Acknowledgments:**

The NPWS acknowledges that this reserve is within the traditional country of the Darug Aboriginal people.

This plan of management is based on a draft plan prepared by the Parks and Wildlife Group, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water. This plan draws extensively on a conservation management plan prepared by Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd in 2000.

Valuable information and comments were provided by Sydney North Regional Advisory Committee.

Cover photograph by Kelly Nowak, NPWS.

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## FOREWORD

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site covers an area of 21 hectares and is located 2 kilometres south of Wisemans Ferry in north west of Sydney.

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site contains the ruins of two camps built to house convict labour during the early years of the colony. The Wisemans Ferry camps were two of a number of major road gang stations established during the construction of the Great North Road and have been assessed as having State significance.

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site also contains two plant species listed under the Threatened Species Conservation Act and six plant species of conservation significance, as well as evidence of the area's past use by the Darug people.

The New South Wales *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires that a plan of management be prepared for each historic site. A draft plan of management for Wisemans Ferry Historic Site was placed on public exhibition from 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 until 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The submissions received were carefully considered before adopting this plan.

This plan contains a number of actions to achieve the State Plan priority to "Protect our native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways", including development and implementation of a pest management strategy, undertaking a systematic fauna and flora survey, and fire management strategies. The plan also contains actions to help "Increase the number of visits to parks", including preparation of a visitation and interpretation plan which will consider how to provide safe visitor access to the historic site whilst still protecting the fragile archaeological relics.

This plan of management establishes the scheme of operations for Wisemans Ferry Historic Site. In accordance with section 73B of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, this plan of management is hereby adopted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Sartor', written in a cursive style.

**Frank Sartor MP**  
**Minister for Climate Change and the Environment**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 HISTORIC SITES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Historic sites are reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) to identify, protect and conserve areas associated with a person, event or historical theme, or containing a building, place, feature or landscape of cultural significance.

Under Section 30F of the NPW Act, historic sites are managed in accordance with the following principles:

- the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value;
- the conservation of natural values;
- provision for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the historic site's natural and cultural values;
- provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the historic site's natural and cultural values;
- the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the historic site's natural and cultural values; and
- provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

### **1.2 WISEMANS FERRY HISTORIC SITE**

#### **1.2.1 Location and regional context**

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site ("the historic site") covers an area of 21.38 hectares. It is located approximately 50 kilometres north west of Sydney and 2 kilometres south of Wisemans Ferry in the Shire of Baulkham Hills. The historic site is on the western side of the steep descent of Old Northern Road (historically known as the Great North Road) down to the Hawkesbury River. It is bounded by private property on the southern and northern boundaries, by River Road on the western side and by Old Northern Road on the eastern side (see Figure 1 – Location of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site).

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site was reserved in 1986 to protect the ruins of two camps built to house convict labour during the early years of the colony from 1827 to 1832.

The Hawkesbury Sandstone plateau is characterised by rugged, rolling to very steep hills with ridge lines, cliffs and terraces. The steep sandstone slopes and outcrops of the area are indicative of the barriers to European exploration and development presented by the Australian bush. In constructing the Great North Road through this area convict workers were forced to follow level plateaus avoiding dissected gullies and following natural ridgelines and Aboriginal tracks where possible. The historic site is located about half way down the descent towards Wisemans Ferry.

### 1.2.2 Importance of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site contains some of the most intact remains of convict road gang accommodation in New South Wales. This type of accommodation was commonly known as a “camp” from at least the early nineteenth century. Two camps from different periods of occupation are evident at the site.

The Wisemans Ferry camps were two of a number of major road gang stations established during the construction of the Castle Hill to Hunter River section of the Great North Road between 1826 and 1832. The Great North Road is considered to be “the most substantial road engineering undertaking, and the best expression of convict road gang layout” in Australian convict road construction (Pearson and Marshall, 1998:71). The association of the camps with this engineering feat significantly enhances the importance of the site.

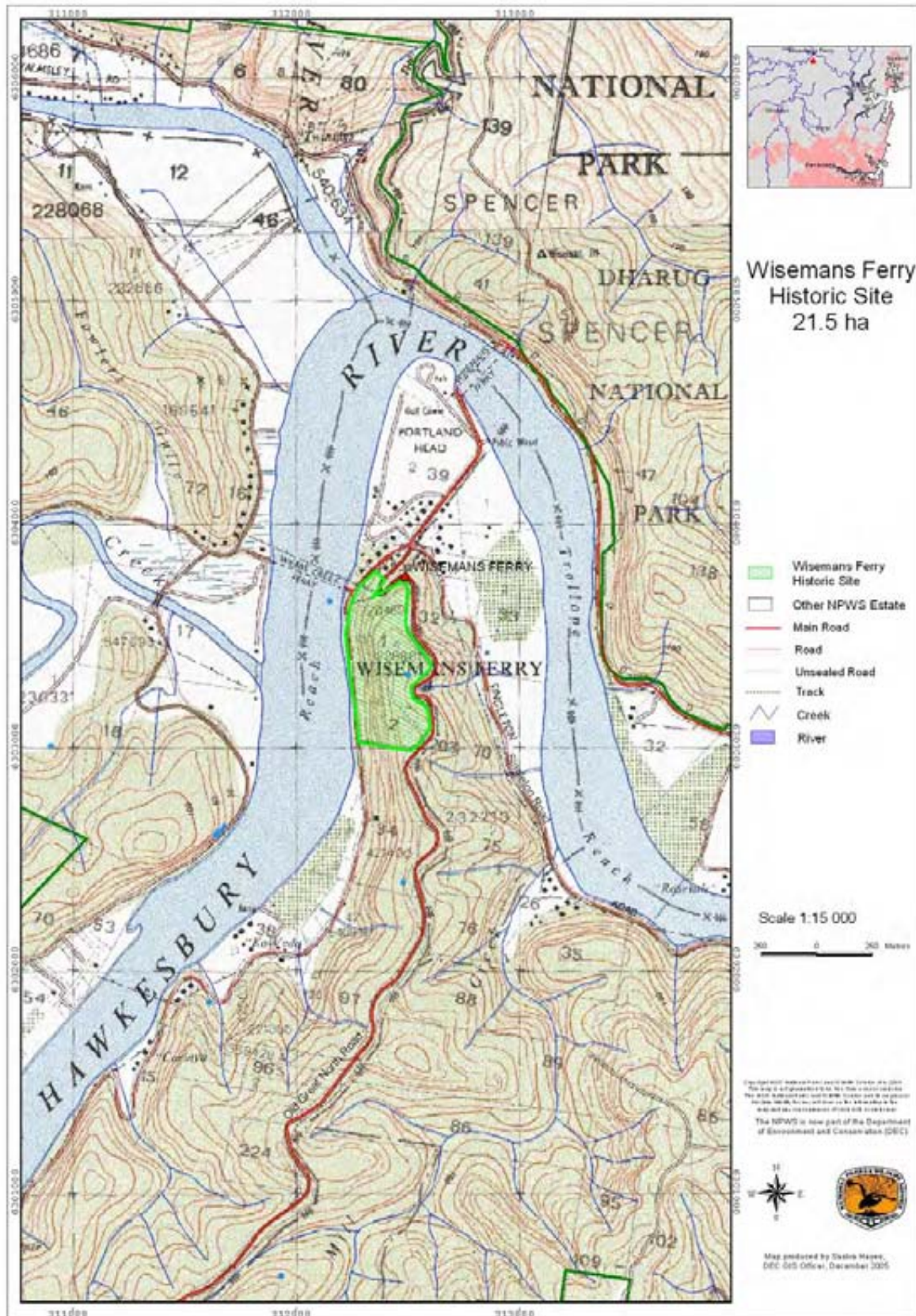
Wisemans Ferry Historic Site has been assessed as having State significance and suitable for recommendation for inclusion on the NSW State Heritage Register (Austral Archaeology 2000). The two convict camp sites have direct links to the Old Great North Road in Darug National Park which has been listed as a component of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Area.

After the descending section of the Great North Road to Wisemans Ferry was completed in 1832, the camp sites at Wisemans Ferry were dismantled and the two groups of stone building remains were left relatively undisturbed.

In addition to its convict relics, Wisemans Ferry Historic Site contains a large number of Aboriginal grinding grooves on an elevated rock platform in the south of the site and two potential Aboriginal archaeological sites.

Most of the historic site is typical Sydney Sandstone Ridgetop Woodland, however it contains at least two species listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act), being *Ancistrachne maidenii* and *Olearia cordata*. The historic site also contains at least six species of conservation significance (Douglas, 1996).

Figure 1 – LOCATION OF WISEMANS FERRY HISTORIC SITE



## 2. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

### 2.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The management of historic sites in NSW is in the context of a legislative and policy framework, primarily the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), the *National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2002* (NPW Reg) and the policies of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Historic remains, Aboriginal cultural relics and potential sub-surface archaeological features within reserves are protected under the provisions of the NPW Act. In addition, Section 30F of the NPW Act identifies management principles for historic sites while Section 72AA lists the matters to be considered in the preparation of a plan of management.

Department policies arise from the legislative background and internationally accepted principles of park management. They relate to nature conservation, Aboriginal and historic heritage conservation, recreation, commercial use, research and communication.

Department policies for the management of historic sites, and for the management of historic places within other reserve categories, are based on the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter, 1999) and guidelines developed by the Heritage Branch, Department of Planning.

Department policies for management of Aboriginal sites are based on a set of principles which include acknowledgment that Aboriginal people should participate in decision making and management of sites and places of cultural importance, and have cultural authority and self-determination to control the protection, preservation and promotion of their culture and heritage.

Other legislation, international agreements and charters may also apply to management of the area. In particular, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EPA Act) requires the assessment and mitigation of the environmental impacts of any works proposed in this plan through a Review of Environmental Factors. The *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) identifies and protects native plants and animals in danger of becoming extinct. The Act also provides for species recovery and threat abatement programs. Relevant sections of the *Heritage Act 1977* will also apply, including the need to obtain any necessary approvals prior to works in and around relics within the historic site.

A plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act. Once the Minister has adopted a plan, no operations may be undertaken within Wisemans Ferry Historic Site except in accordance with the plan. The plan will also apply to any future additions to Wisemans Ferry Historic Site. Where management strategies or works are proposed or any additions to the historic site are made that are not consistent with the plan, an amendment to the plan will be required.

The management objectives, desired outcomes and actions contained within this plan of management are consistent with the Wisemans Ferry Historic Site

Conservation Management Plan (Austral Archaeology 2000). This conservation management plan has been approved by the NSW Heritage Council.

## **2.2 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site will be managed to:

- protect convict relics within the site;
- protect Aboriginal grinding grooves and other potential sites;
- retain the general appearance of the historic site so as to retain the current setting of the ruins and other features of cultural heritage;
- protect flora and fauna species, particularly those of conservation significance;  
and
- provide for appropriate educational visits and research.

### **3. WISEMANS FERRY HISTORIC SITE**

#### **3.1 NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

##### **3.1.1 Geology, landforms and soils**

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site is located on the Hornsby Plateau within the Sydney Basin. The area is characterised by rugged, rolling to very steep hills with large terraces. The bedrock is Hawkesbury Sandstone and the soils are generally shallow, well-drained skeletal sands, sandy loams or sandy clays which are prone to soil erosion. The historic site lies at the top of a steep north-facing ridge which is immediately south of the junction of the Hawkesbury and MacDonal Rivers and is highly visible from these rivers, river flats and hillslopes to the north of the Hawkesbury River.

The historic site is characterised by steep slopes with small sandstone outcrops. Generally the site slopes from the elevated and precipitous western cliff-line that overlooks the Hawkesbury River down towards the eastern boundary of the site that is defined by Old Northern Road.

The historic site also slopes from south to north. The elevated southern portion of the site contains relatively large, flat sandstone outcrops with small sandstone overhangs in the lower elevations. In places the surface of the sandstone has a distinctive ridged and corrugated appearance, reflecting the variable content of ironstone and quartz pebble in the rock. The northern portion of the historic site has extensive terraces of jumbled sandstone boulders with few of the flat platforms that characterise the southern portions of the site.

#### **Desired Outcomes**

- Soil erosion is minimised.
- The landscape and scenic values of the historic site when viewed from both within and outside the site are maintained.

#### **Actions**

- Undertake all developments and earth works within the historic site in a manner that minimises erosion, uses compatible material, and incorporates appropriate soil erosion and sedimentation control works.
- Retain the natural hillslopes and ridgelines free of obvious clearings.
- Prohibit the construction of buildings, towers or new roads at the historic site.

### 3.1.2 Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal groups have inhabited the Sydney region for at least the last 20,000 years. Occupation is believed to have been sporadic until about 5,000 years ago when, as seas stabilised at their current levels, there appears to have been an intensification of occupation (Austral Archaeology 2000). Wisemans Ferry Historic Site lies within the area traditionally occupied by the Darug people.

Archaeological evidence at Wisemans Ferry Historic Site includes a large number of grinding grooves on a rock platform affording sweeping views over the Hawkesbury River and across to Dharug National Park. A number of potential archaeological sites have also been located beneath small sandstone rock shelters that occur across the historic site.

The Aboriginal sites at Wisemans Ferry Historic Site are relatively inaccessible. More accessible sites exist in the nearby Dharug and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Parks.

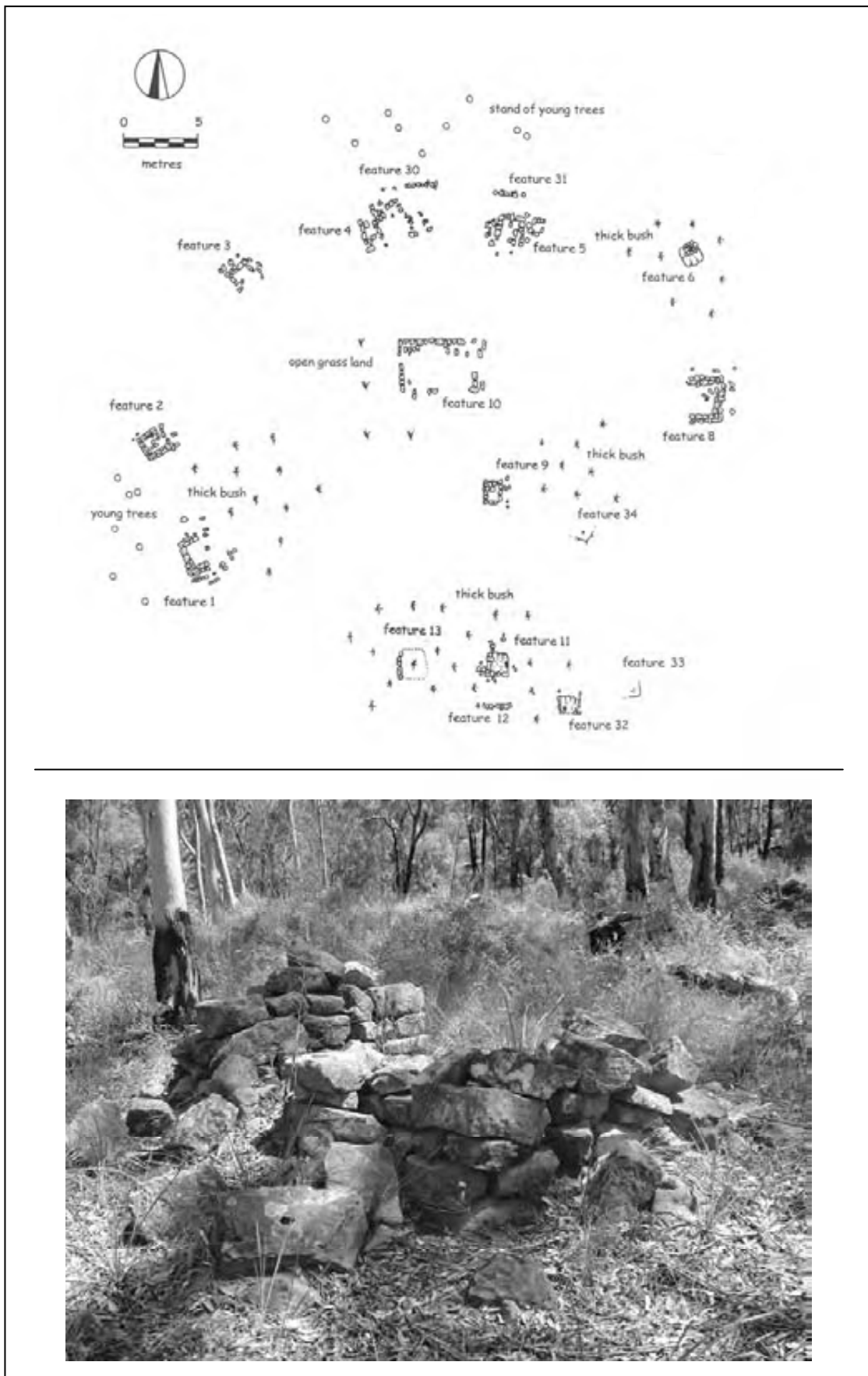
The early European history of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site is inextricably linked to the construction of the Great North Road. The Great North Road was designed to connect Sydney to the fertile lands of the Hunter Valley, with construction work commencing in 1826. The building of the road was an exceptional engineering feat and was dependent on convict labour in the form of road gangs.

In 1827 a number of convict road gangs were assigned to construct the Wisemans Ferry descent. The gangs, averaging 50 men, were stationed on what is now Wisemans Ferry Historic Site. They were initially employed in clearing, burning and stumping the line of the Great North Road down to Wisemans Ferry, before cutting, quarrying and building retaining walls and building the road. Their rations were supplied on contract by Solomon Wiseman, who had established the first hotel at Wisemans Ferry nine years previously (Karskens 1985).

The first camp was built on the site shortly after the road gangs arrived in 1827. The historic site was a convenient location for the camp as it was close to the major works on the road as well as being removed from the few settlers in the area (Karskens 1985). The remains of the first camp are on the eastern side of the main ridge to the north of a small gully. The ruins in this area are known as Group 1 and consist of a group of collapsed small square stone features in a cleared area of approximately 40 square metres (See Figure 2 – Group 1 Site Plan and Feature 8).

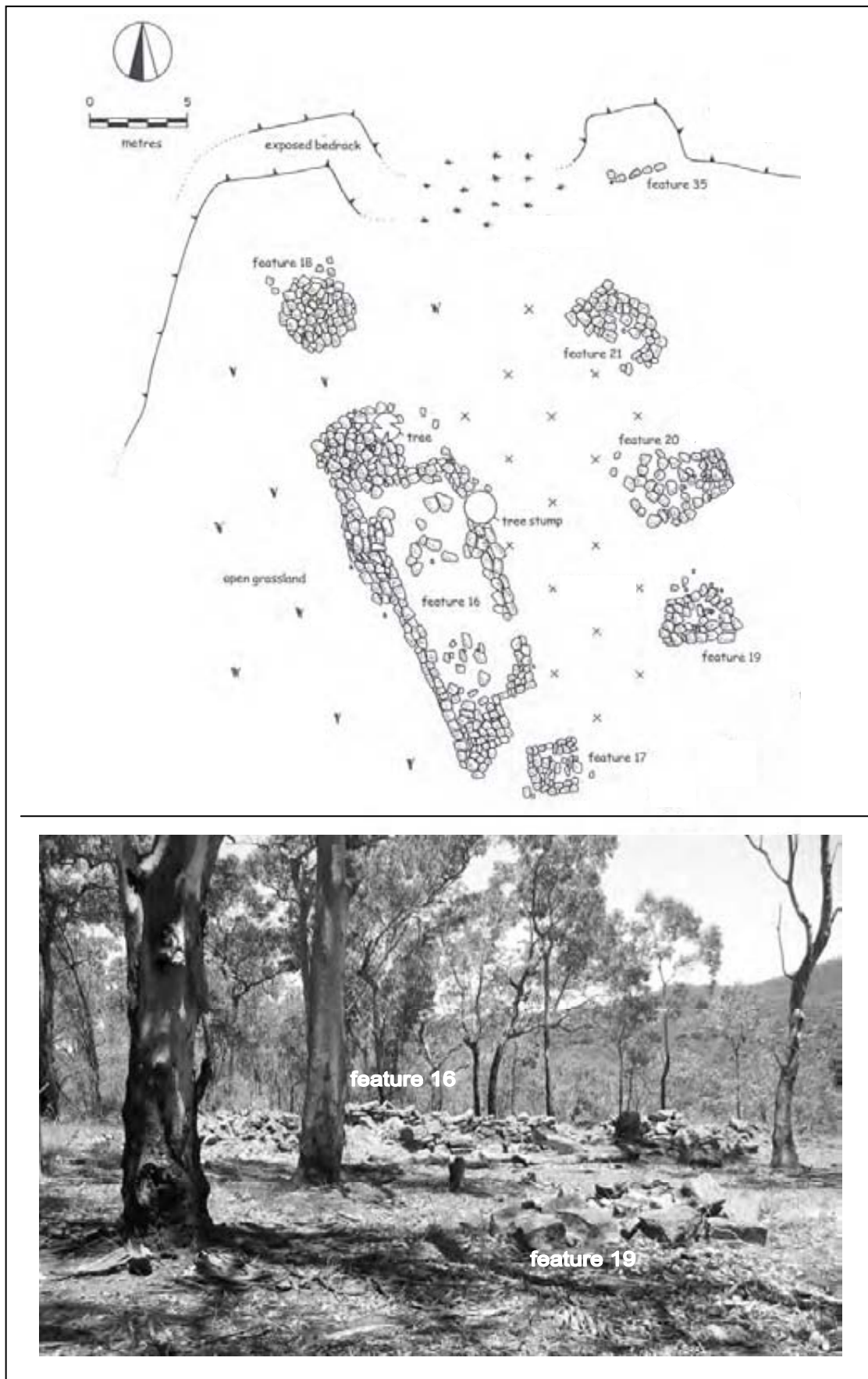
The second camp was built later than the first, probably some time in the early 1830s. Group 2 is located towards the northern end of the historic site in a wide flat terrace approximately 300 metres from the end of the road access track. This camp also contains the remnants of a number of stone structures believed to represent a later model of convict accommodation (Karskens 1985, Austral Archaeology 2000).

Figure 2 – GROUP 1 SITE PLAN & FEATURE 8





**Figure 3 – GROUP 2 SITE PLAN**



Other evidence within the historic site associated with the work of the convict gangs and then later land uses includes the feature known as Courthouse Cave, stone walls, carved steps, paths, small terraces, and various stone cuts (Austral Archaeology 2000). The camps are thought to be the most intact convict camps to survive in New South Wales. At least ten camps were built along the length of the Great North Road although there are few remains of any of them. As the camp sites were only ever meant to provide temporary accommodation they were dismantled or abandoned when they were vacated.

The two camp sites are listed in the NSW State Heritage Inventory, in the Hawkesbury River Regional Environmental Plan, as an item of environmental heritage under the Baulkham Hills Shire Local Environmental Plan, and by the National Trust (Austral Archaeology 2000).

The advent of steamers between Sydney and the Hunter Valley from the early 1830s meant the Great North Road rapidly fell into disuse (Karskens 1991) and from 1832 until its acquisition by the NPWS in 1986 the camp site and surrounding land remained largely untouched.

About 16 kilometres of the Great North Road is currently protected within Dharug and Yengo National Parks which lie to the north of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site, on the northern side of the Hawkesbury River. A number of original features of the road are also visible along the section of the Old Northern Road that forms the eastern boundary of the historic site, including blasting holes, hand cut rock faces, retaining walls and a small stone bridge.

The Convict Trail Project is a joint management initiative which aims to conserve, manage and promote the Great North Road as an outstanding example of early convict and colonial heritage. The project team is composed of community representatives, local and state government agencies (including NPWS) and non-government organisations such as the National Trust. The project aims to ensure that the length of the road is managed and interpreted in its entirety.

### **Desired Outcomes**

- Cultural heritage features and values are protected and managed in accordance with their significance and with the Wisemans Ferry Historic Site Conservation Management Plan (2000).
- Aboriginal cultural heritage values are protected in partnership with the local Aboriginal community.
- Park management activities, such as weed and fire control programs, do not adversely impact cultural heritage items within the historic site.

## Actions

- Undertake consultation on Aboriginal site management issues with relevant local Aboriginal community groups or organisations, including but not limited to the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council, Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation and Darug Custodial Aboriginal Corporation.
- Maintain the archaeological integrity of the historic site by removal of plants from around the ruins (utilising contemporary best practice management techniques), regular site inspections and monitoring for any damage to the sites, and appropriate maintenance.
- Integrate the historic site with the Convict Trail Project management activities and interpretation programs.
- Prepare a State Heritage Register nomination for consideration by the NSW Heritage Council.
- Update and maintain site data contained within the relevant s170 register.

### 3.1.3 Native Plants and Animals

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site is located within an area characterised by Sydney Sandstone Ridgetop Open Forest/Woodland with small areas of rock platform heath and scrub. This vegetation type has a wide distribution on Hawkesbury and Narrabeen Group sandstones.

The dominant tree species are red bloodwood (*Corymbia gummifera*), grey gum (*Eucalyptus punctata*), forest sheoak (*Allocasuarina torulosa*) and small numbers of yellow bloodwood (*Corymbia eximia*), narrow-leaved stringybark (*Eucalyptus sparsifolia*) and narrow-leaved apple (*Angophora bakeri*) (Austral Archaeology 2000). A wide range of climbers, creepers and ferns are also present within certain portions of the site with herbs and grasses in the south-east.

The crest of the ridge supports a scrub/heath community that includes narrow-leaved stringybark and a scrub understorey of tick bush (*Kunzea ambigua*), teatree (*Leptospermum parvifolium*, *L. trinervium*), black sheoak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) and mint bush (*Prostanthera sp.*). Pockets of heath on the west-facing escarpment include heath-myrtle (*Baeckea diosmifolia*), *Micromyrtus ciliata*, *Juncus continuus*, *Cyperus laevis*, sword-sedge (*Lepidosperma laterale*) and *Scirpus sp.*

A notable feature of vegetation on the site is the presence of sapling regrowth, especially in the vicinity of the convict camps but present across the site. It is possible that considerable areas of native vegetation were cleared during the occupation period (Austral Archaeology 2000). The regrowth of small saplings and shrubs in and around the ruins is causing some damage to the historic archaeological remains and cultural landscape.

A population of each of the threatened species *Olearia cordata* and *Ancistrachne maidenii* occur within the historic site. These species are listed as vulnerable under the TSC Act and both are considered vulnerable to habitat loss due to trail maintenance, inappropriate fire regimes and local extinction due to small population sizes. A Priorities Action Statement has been prepared that identifies the strategies and actions to promote the recovery of threatened species, populations and ecological communities and manage key threatening processes.

An additional six species found within the historic site have regional conservation significance. These are: *Comesperma ericinum*, *Cyperus laevis*, *Doryanthes excelsa*, *Joycea pallida*, *Micromyrtus ciliata*, and *Prostanthera* aff. *ovalifolia* (Douglas 1996).

There has been no systematic survey of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site for native fauna. It is likely, however, that a number of common native animals such as possums and swamp wallabies would occur at the site due to the range of vegetation types present, the comparatively undeveloped nature of the site and surrounding area, and the physical links between the site and nearby national parks and other reserves.

### **Desired Outcomes**

- The diversity of existing native flora and fauna and ecosystems, including threatened species populations, is maintained.
- Management strategies will preserve both naturally and culturally significant elements within the landscape.
- The implementation of the Priority Action Statement at the historic site takes into account the cultural significance of the site.

### **Actions**

- Develop a control program for native vegetation encroaching on archaeological remains and the cultural landscape at the historic site. The control program will include a suitable level of natural and cultural values risk assessment and implement best practice bush regeneration techniques.
- Implement Priority Action Statement actions for threatened species, populations and ecological communities found in the historic site, including development of a species management plan for known occurrences and identification of further potential habitat.
- Undertake a systematic fauna and flora survey.

### 3.2 INTRODUCED PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), privet (*Ligustrum sinense* and *L. lucidum*), and lantana (*Lantana camara*) have been recorded on Wisemans Ferry Historic Site (Austral Archaeology 2000). These plants are concentrated around the historic remains and threaten both the cultural and natural values of the historic site, including *Olearia cordata*.

The *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* places an obligation upon public authorities to control noxious weeds on land that it occupies to the extent necessary to prevent such species spreading to adjoining lands. Of the above plants, blackberry and privet have been identified as noxious within the Shire of Baulkham Hills.

No introduced animals have been recorded on the site however it is likely that foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), cats (*Felis catus*), rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and rats (*Rattus rattus*) are present.

#### Desired Outcome

- Introduced plants and animals are controlled, and where possible eliminated, using methods that will not impact on the natural and cultural values of the site.

#### Actions

- Develop and implement a pest management strategy for the control and, where possible, eradication of introduced plants and animals in the historic site and undertake pest control in accordance with the Sydney North Region Pest Management Strategy.
- Utilise control methods that will not have a detrimental impact on the natural or cultural values of the site.

### 3.3 FIRE

Fire has been an important factor influencing the environment of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site for many tens of thousands of years. Fire is a natural process and one of the established physical factors of the Australian environment to which native plant and animal communities have adapted. Management of fire is essential to protect neighbouring lands and the land within the historic site.

NPWS is a fire authority under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and is responsible for containing fires within the historic site and ensuring they do not cause damage to other land or property. This responsibility includes the implementation of fuel management programs by prescribed burning and other means. The department may also assist with the control and suppression of fires adjacent to reserved lands.

The connectivity between Wisemans Ferry Historic Site and adjoining bushland, including other NPWS-managed areas, made it suitable for the historic site to be included in a joint reserve fire management strategy (NPWS 2006). Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve, Maroota Historic Site and Wisemans Ferry Historic Site Fire Management Strategy outlines the recent fire history of these reserves, key assets within and adjoining the reserves including sites of natural and cultural heritage value, fire management zones, and fire control advantages such as management trails and water supply points.

The NPWS will also participate in risk management and operational planning under the Baulkham Hills Bushfire Management Committee.

There has been very little research into the impact of fire on archaeological sites although Gojak (1994) has highlighted a number of potential fire impacts for Wisemans Ferry Historic Site. As archaeological remains at the site consist of low standing exposed sandstone stonework, fires may have an adverse impact on the physical evidence. Exfoliation and dislodgment of sandstone is likely to occur during most fires and has the potential to impact on both historic and Aboriginal sites at Wisemans Ferry. Hazard reduction activities such as cutting of control lines and grubbing out stumps and post-fire soil erosion may also impact on archaeological remains (Gojak 1994).

The conservation plan for Wisemans Ferry Historic Site recommends a minimum curtilage of 20 metres around all historic features within the camps and 3 metres around all isolated features within which leaf litter, dead timber and other fuel will be removed to minimise the risk of high intensity fires. Vegetation adjacent to Aboriginal sites also requires monitoring and removal if encroachment occurs. Inappropriate fire regimes have been identified as a threat to the threatened species *Ancistrachne maidenii* and *Olearia cordata* and the requirements of these species will need to be taken into account in any fire planning for the historic site.

### **Desired Outcome**

- Life, property, cultural and natural values in and adjacent to the historic site are protected from bushfire.

### **Actions**

- Manage fire in the historic site in accordance with the Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve, Maroota Historic Site and Wisemans Ferry Historic Site Fire Management Strategy.
- Establish vegetation curtilages around archaeological features and ensure fuel reduction activities are undertaken in such a way as to minimise impact on archaeological sites. Prohibit prescribed burns within these curtilages.
- Conduct pre and post-fire surveys targeting Aboriginal sites, historic relics, threatened plants or animals or other species of conservation value.

- Maintain records of fire occurrence at the historic site and conduct and document post-fire assessments of the impact of fire on the historic site's natural and cultural values.
- Encourage the incorporation of boundary fire breaks and other fuel reduction measures when land use planning and development applications are prepared for adjacent properties, in accordance with the Rural Fire Service's guidelines for "Planning for Bushfire Protection".

### **3.4 PUBLIC USE**

Providing safe public use of Wisemans Ferry Historic Site is difficult. Entry to the site is currently only possible from Old Northern Road and the entrance is located on a blind corner. At this entrance there is a small pull-in area and a steep and narrow management trail, secured by a locked gate about 10 metres from Old Northern Road. It is not possible to accommodate a wider pull-in bay and parking area due to the terrain, and the current capacity for parking is minimal.

The first camp is visible from the management trail about 500 metres from the entrance. Informal paths provide access to the camp from the management trail. The second camp is more difficult to locate, being approximately 300 metres from the end of the management trail along a faint foot pad.

The difficulties of site access and the difficulty in locating the second camp site have undoubtedly led to the preservation of the camps. Although some unauthorised excavation has been conducted on the site in the past, there is no evidence of recent illicit activities or vandalism at any of the sites. It appears there is very limited visitation to the historic site, with most visitation restricted to small groups and individuals who have a particular interest in the Great North Road and/or convict camp sites. The difficult access, low level of ruins on the site and their relatively poor condition mitigates a dynamic visitor experience.

With the inclusion of the Great North Road section of Dharug National Park in the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Area, there may be an increase in visitors and in their expectations of the historic site. Given the fragile nature of the archaeological relics and difficulties of access, self-guided tours should be discouraged. Individuals and groups who do not have an understanding of the importance and rarity of the ruins may inadvertently cause damage by dislodging stones, lighting fires or fossicking. However, visitation by those sensitive to the fragile nature of the site, such as for approved research and for interpretation activities, provides opportunities for appreciation and increased knowledge. Those visiting the historic site and how they visit the site needs further consideration. If numbers of visitors increase it may be necessary to provide an alternative access route, such as a walking track from Wisemans Ferry, or to limit numbers.

Interpretative signs have previously been installed at the gate and at each of the camp sites. Although the historical background information is accurate, they also depict conjectural reconstruction drawings which are now considered dubious. These

signs also do not refer to either the natural heritage of the site or Aboriginal occupation of the area.

In addition to on-site signage, alternative interpretation of the site should be encouraged. Publications which promote understanding of the Great North Road or the Wisemans Ferry camp sites should be promoted. Interpretation should emphasise the relationship between the site and the Great North Road, in particular those sections of it preserved in Dharug and Yengo National Parks, and encourage visitation to these sites as they are more easily accessible.

### **Desired Outcome**

- Visitation at the historic does not impact on the site's values.

### **Actions**

- Retain current pedestrian access to the historic site via the management trail from Old Northern Road. No additional roads or parking will be constructed within the historic site.
- Prepare a Visitation and Interpretation Plan for Wisemans Ferry Historic Site. Such a plan will include consideration of the fragility of the site and other constraints (both natural and cultural), options for alternative pedestrian access, interpretation of the site, appropriate types and numbers of visitors, and methods of managing visitation to the historic site.
- Formalise the footpad to and around the camp sites into a walking track by hand clearing to avoid disturbance to sites. Mark walking tracks to the camp sites if necessary using a subtle and low key approach.
- Regularly inspect the management trail and walking track and hand clear overgrowing vegetation as necessary.
- No other facilities will be constructed apart from low key visitor facilities, which may include signage and benches but will not include toilets, picnic grounds, a visitor centre or other such facilities. Camping, fires, dogs and other non-native animals will not be permitted within the historic site.

## **3.5 RESEARCH**

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site has a high degree of research potential related to both its cultural and natural heritage values. An increasing body of research has been conducted on the Great North Road and associated camp sites (Austral 2000, Burke 1988, Comber 1990, Karskens 1985 and 1991, Lavelle et al 1999, Thorp 1987).

Wisemans Ferry Historic Site is predicted to contain the most intact archaeological evidence of convict camps in NSW. The ability of the site to demonstrate convict building techniques, the development of the layout and construction of convict camp sites, and the living and working conditions of convicts in the early nineteenth century



is high (Austral Archaeology, 2000). It is unlikely, however, that a comprehensive archaeological excavation of the camp site would be feasible. This is due to several factors including the high cost of research excavations, the difficulty of access to the site making the educational opportunities of excavation difficult to realise, and the destructive nature of archaeological excavations.

The relationship of the site to the Great North Road and other camp sites along the road is an important historical research theme. Similarly the comparative history and archaeology of the various camp sites both along this road and along other convict built roads would be a fruitful area of investigation.

Aboriginal sites located within Wisemans Ferry Historic Site are linked to a large number of Aboriginal sites in the general area. The sites provide opportunities for research into the use of the area by Aboriginal people. Another possible research theme is the relationship between the local Aboriginal people and the road surveyors, convict workers and supervisors.

Only limited research into native or introduced plants and animal species, including threatened species, has been undertaken within the historic site.

### **Desired Outcome**

- Research enhances the management information base for convict and Aboriginal sites and landscapes and the natural values of the historic site whilst protecting the integrity of those values.

### **Actions**

- Encourage non-destructive research into the natural and cultural values of the site. Destructive archaeological research is not encouraged and will only be approved if it is likely to assist in the management or understanding of the site and is in keeping with current legislative and policy requirements. An Excavation Permit under section 140 of the Heritage Act is required for all excavation works that impact on sub-surface relics.
- A research prospectus will be prepared to guide research projects within the historic site, with preferred topics being those of direct relevance to site management.

## **3.6 MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS**

There is one management trail in the historic site, leading from Old Northern Road approximately 400 metres into the site. The trail is locked and gated near the road. There are no turning circles along the trail, making egress difficult for more than one vehicle at a time. The trail receives limited use from NPWS vehicles, mainly for access for fuel reduction and weed control around the camp sites and periodic site monitoring. Trail maintenance activities have been noted as a threat to populations of the threatened species *Olearia cordata*.

## **Desired Outcomes**

- Management facilities adequately serve management needs and have acceptable levels of impact on the historic site's values.
- Trail maintenance activities do not impact on threatened species populations.

## **Actions**

- Maintain the existing management trail as the only vehicle-based management trail within the historic site.
- Ensure personnel undertaking trail maintenance are able to identify threatened species and are aware of specific habitat requirements.

#### 4. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Action	Plan Reference
<b>High priority</b>	
Implement a regular inspection program to examine and maintain the access trail, walking track, cultural sites, and vegetation encroachment.	3.1.2, 3.4, 3.6
Establish and maintain a vegetation curtilage around archaeological features on the site.	3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.3
Prepare a State Heritage Register nomination.	3.1.2
Implement the Priorities Action Statement for threatened species.	3.1.3
Develop and implement a pest management strategy for the control and, where possible, eradication of introduced plants and animals in the historic site and undertake pest control in accordance with the Sydney North Region Pest Management Strategy.	3.2
Manage fire in the historic site in accordance with the Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve, Maroota Historic Site and Wisemans Ferry Historic Site Fire Management Strategy.	3.3
<b>Medium priority</b>	
Undertake consultation on Aboriginal site management issues with the relevant local Aboriginal community groups or organisations.	3.1.2
Formalise the footpad between the camp sites.	3.4
Integrate the historic site with the Convict Trail Project management activities and interpretation programs.	3.1.2
Prepare and implement a Visitation and Interpretation Plan.	3.4
<b>Low priority</b>	
Update and maintain site data on s170 register.	3.1.2
Undertake a systematic fauna and flora survey.	3.1.3
Prepare a research prospectus to guide research projects within the historic site.	3.5
<b>Ongoing</b>	
Undertake all developments and earth works in a sympathetic manner.	3.1.1
Prohibit the construction of buildings, towers or new roads/access trails and retain natural hillslopes and ridgelines free of obvious clearings.	3.1.1, 3.3
Maintain local staff awareness of threatened species requirements.	3.1.3, 3.6
Utilise pest control methods that will not have a detrimental impact on the natural or cultural values of the site.	3.2
Maintain fire records for the site and undertake and document post-fire impact assessments.	3.3
Conduct pre- and post-fire surveys targeting cultural relics and species of conservation significance.	3.3
Encourage the incorporation of fuel reduction measures when land use planning and development applications are prepared for adjacent properties.	3.3
Retain current pedestrian access via the management trail from Old Northern Road.	3.4

Action	Plan Reference
No other facilities will be constructed apart from low key visitor facilities.	3.4
Encourage non-destructive research into the natural and cultural values of the site. Destructive archaeological research is not encouraged and will only be approved if it is likely to assist in the management or understanding of the site and is in keeping with current legislative and policy requirements.	3.5

(See Section 3 for the full text of each Action)

### KEY TO PRIORITIES

**High** priority activities are those imperative to achievement of the objectives and desired outcomes. They must be undertaken in the near future to avoid significant deterioration in natural, cultural or management resources.

**Medium** priority activities are those that are necessary to achieve the objectives and desired outcomes but are not urgent.

**Low** priority activities are desirable to achieve management objectives and desired outcomes, but can be deferred in preference to other priorities.

**Ongoing** actions are those actions undertaken as part of a regular management routine.

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