

Annexure M: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study



Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study

Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2050

Prepared for
Sydney Olympic Park Authority
February 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

We respect and acknowledge the Wangal people, their lands, and waterways, their rich cultural heritage, and their deep connection to Country, and we acknowledge their Elders past and present. We are committed to truth-telling and to engaging with the Wangal people to support the protection of their culture and heritage. We strongly advocate social and cultural justice and support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report may contain images or names of First Nations people who have passed away.

Report register

The following report register documents the development of this report, in accordance with GML's Quality Management System.

Job No.	Issue No.	Notes/Description	Issue Date
23-0043	1	Draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study	1 June 2023
23-0043	2	Revised Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study	10 July 2023
23-0043	3	Final Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study	29 August 2023
23-0043	4	Revised Final Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study	16 February 2024

Quality management

The report has been reviewed and approved for issue in accordance with the GML quality management policy and procedures.

It aligns with best-practice heritage conservation and management, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* and heritage and environmental legislation and guidelines relevant to the subject place.

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Cover image

Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: Nearmap, 1 May 2023)

Executive summary

The Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) engaged GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) to prepare an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study (ACH) in accordance with the due diligence process prescribed by Heritage NSW.

A desktop study and study area inspection—in collaboration with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metro LALC)—were undertaken. These considered the Aboriginal cultural landscape, the local environment, historical material, relevant archaeological contexts and opportunities for interpretation, community engagement and education strategies. Several archaeological and heritage studies have previously been undertaken and a summary of this work is provided.

Strong social and cultural connections with the land within Sydney Olympic Park and local Aboriginal peoples are confirmed. These connections offer the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) future opportunities for interpretation, community engagement and intergeneration education. Further research into the cultural landscape of Sydney Olympic Park both pre-and post-1788 may allow for a more comprehensive understanding of these connections, particularly in re-contextualising earlier research and assessing continuing connections.

Research has identified that much of Sydney Olympic Park has nil-to-low archaeological sensitivity. Large land areas within Sydney Olympic Park are reclaimed and accordingly are underlain by historical fills and constructed soils, neither of which hold archaeological potential for Aboriginal objects and/or sites. Other areas were subject to intense activities that historically have disturbed, if not removed, landforms and soils. The Newington Nature Reserve Forest and immediate surrounds offer the only intact natural soils in Sydney Olympic Park. As such, these areas are ascribed Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity.

This report demonstrates there is an opportunity to build on existing research, and to further deliver to SOPA's vision for Aboriginal engagement and support. This can be achieved through continued and inclusive collaboration with local Aboriginal communities towards their meaningful and ongoing engagement in the identification, planning, management and conservation of heritage values at Sydney Olympic Park.

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Acronyms and definitions

The following acronyms and definitions are used in this report.

Acronyms	Definitions
ACH	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
ACHAR	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
AHCP	Aboriginal History & Connections Program
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System
AHIP	Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit
BP	Before Present
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
EPA Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>
ERS	Eastern Regional Sequence
GIS	Geographic Information System
GML	GML Heritage Pty Ltd
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGA	Local Government Area
NPW	National Parks and Wildlife
NPW Act	<i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i>
NSW	New South Wales
OEH	Office of Environment and Heritage
OSL	Optically Stimulated Luminescence
PAD	Potential archaeological deposit
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
RANAD	Royal Australian Armament Depot
SOP	Sydney Olympic Park
SOPA	Sydney Olympic Park Authority

1 Introduction



1 Introduction

Sydney Olympic Park is transforming into a thriving suburb strategically located in the centre of Greater Sydney. It is a suburb that benefits from a diversity of land uses, proximity to both Sydney and Parramatta central business districts, and is of national significance, all of which have played an important role in its evolution since hosting the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. As the 640-hectare site continues to evolve into vibrant neighbourhoods, it will reconnect with its Wangal roots and extensive natural assets to provide a meaningful connection to Country.

The Sydney Olympic Park 2050 Vision & Strategy (the Vision) was released in June 2022 and serves as a roadmap to inform decision-making for the next three decades. Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2050 (Master Plan 2050) is the next stage of strategic planning for Sydney Olympic Park. Master Plan 2050 will ensure a coordinated, long term development plan is prepared for the whole precinct.

The most recent iterations of a master plan for Sydney Olympic Park were completed in 2018 and 2021, to support the delivery of Sydney Metro West. Building upon the Vision, Master Plan 2050 considers Sydney Olympic Park holistically, seeking opportunities to integrate thinking about the parklands and urban core together, enhancing its role in Greater Sydney.

The Vision articulates an aspiration to position Sydney Olympic Park as Sydney's Green Beating Heart: a place that is energised with everyday life, is Country-first, nature positive and where Sydney comes to play.

In 2050, Sydney Olympic Park will be a complex, layered suburb offering a rich and varied range of experiences. Many will live and work here, others will visit for events, diverse attractions or for everyday retail and entertainment. Master Plan 2050 aims to balance certainty with flexibility enabling Sydney Olympic Park's future to be resilient, dynamic and able to leverage future opportunities and technologies not yet known.

1.1 Project background

Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) engaged GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) to prepare heritage and archaeological services to support the preparation of the Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2050. This Aboriginal Cultural Heritage (ACH) study identifies Aboriginal heritage matters relevant to the future development and opportunities for future research, engagement and education.

Aboriginal, or First Nations, heritage is diverse, rich, and enduring, extending from the deep past to the present as part of a living continuum. The natural and cultural

environment are interwoven in First Nations heritage, creating an interdependent relationship between land and people sustained by cultural knowledge, traditions, and practice. It incorporates intangible heritage, such as Dreaming stories, Song Lines, oral traditions, ceremonies and social practices; and tangible heritage, such as stone tools, bone, woven and wooden implements, shell middens, culturally modified trees, rock art sites, ceremonial places and fringe camps. Many of these items combine both tangible and intangible values through a complex web of interconnection.

In NSW, Aboriginal heritage is principally protected under two Acts (Appendix A):

- the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act); and
- the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EPA Act).

Aboriginal material evidence is defined as Aboriginal objects under the NPW Act. Aboriginal Places, places that were or are of significance to Aboriginal people, that are declared and gazetted by the Minister, are also protected under the NPW Act.

Given that registered 'Aboriginal Places' and 'Aboriginal objects' are afforded statutory protection, owners and managers are required to understand and assess whether there is potential for Aboriginal objects within a specified area of land. This is required to plan for, mitigate and manage any potential for harm to Aboriginal objects as part of proposed activities or actions. Determining if a land area, place or site has Aboriginal objects requires archaeological assessment in accordance with Heritage NSW guidelines for ADD. The assessment outcome helps determine whether further Aboriginal heritage assessment is required or if a proposed action can commence (subject to caution).

The *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in NSW*¹ sets out the reasonable and practicable steps that individuals and organisations need to take in order to:

- identify whether or not Aboriginal objects are, or are likely to be, present in an area;
- determine whether or not proposed activities are likely to harm Aboriginal objects (if present); and
- determine if an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) application is required.

The generic five steps prescribed by Heritage NSW for the due diligence process are outlined below (listed with minor editorial amendments by GML) and have been completed for this assessment:

- Step 1—Determine if the activity will disturb the ground surface or any culturally modified trees.
- Step 2—Search the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) database and use any other sources of information of which you are already aware to determine whether there are any:
 - a. relevant confirmed site records or other associated landscape feature information; and

b. landscape features that are likely to indicate presence of Aboriginal objects.

- Step 3—Determine if you can avoid harm to the object or disturbance of the landscape feature.
- Step 4—Conduct a desktop assessment and visual inspection to confirm if Aboriginal objects are likely to be present.
- Step 5—Undertake further investigations and impact assessment.

As part of the Aboriginal heritage assessment process, consultation with the relevant Traditional Owners/Custodians is key to understanding the heritage values associated with an area, place or site. A study area may hold, or has the potential to hold, other heritage values other than those primarily related to objects or archaeological deposits. Other Aboriginal heritage values may relate to cultural traditions, practices, events, beliefs or historical lived experiences.

1.2 Study area

Sydney Olympic Park is in the Parramatta Local Government Area (LGA) and is identified in Figure 1.1 and 1.2. The study area is associated with the Games of the XXVII Olympiad, known as the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Sydney Olympic Park precinct is the study area for the Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2050 and is defined as the land under the protection and authority of SOPA, as shown in Figure 1.2.

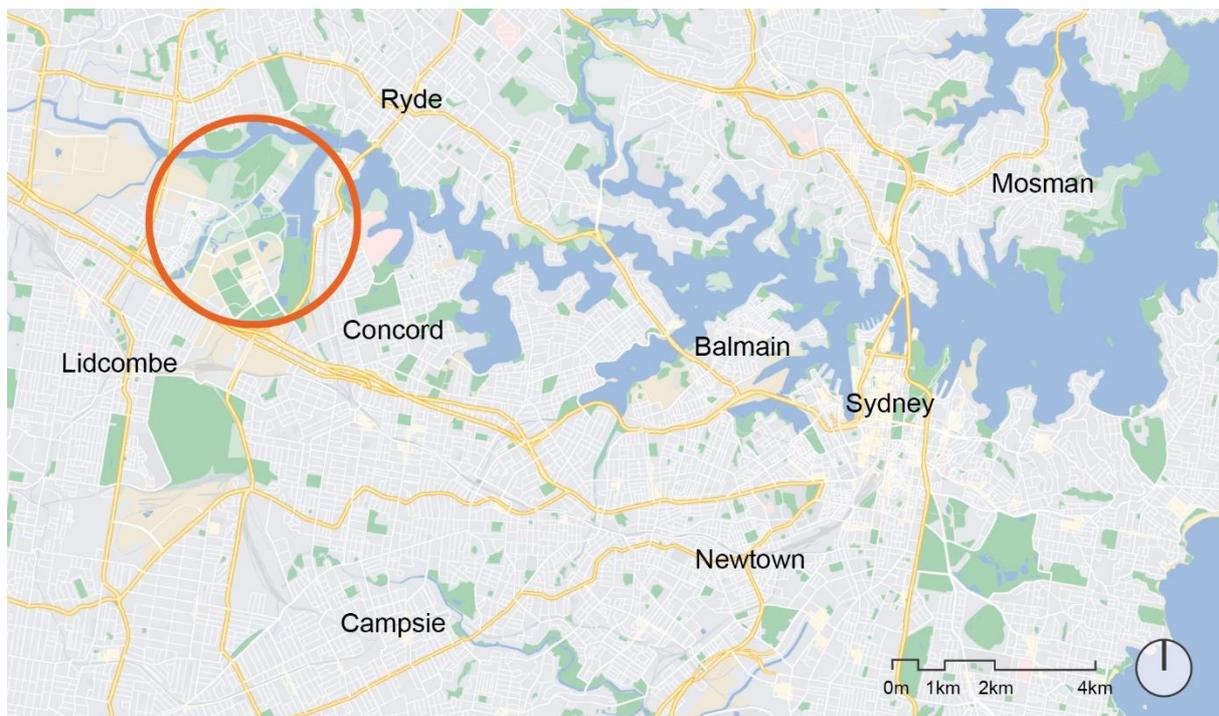


Figure 1.1 The location of Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: Google Maps with GML overlay)

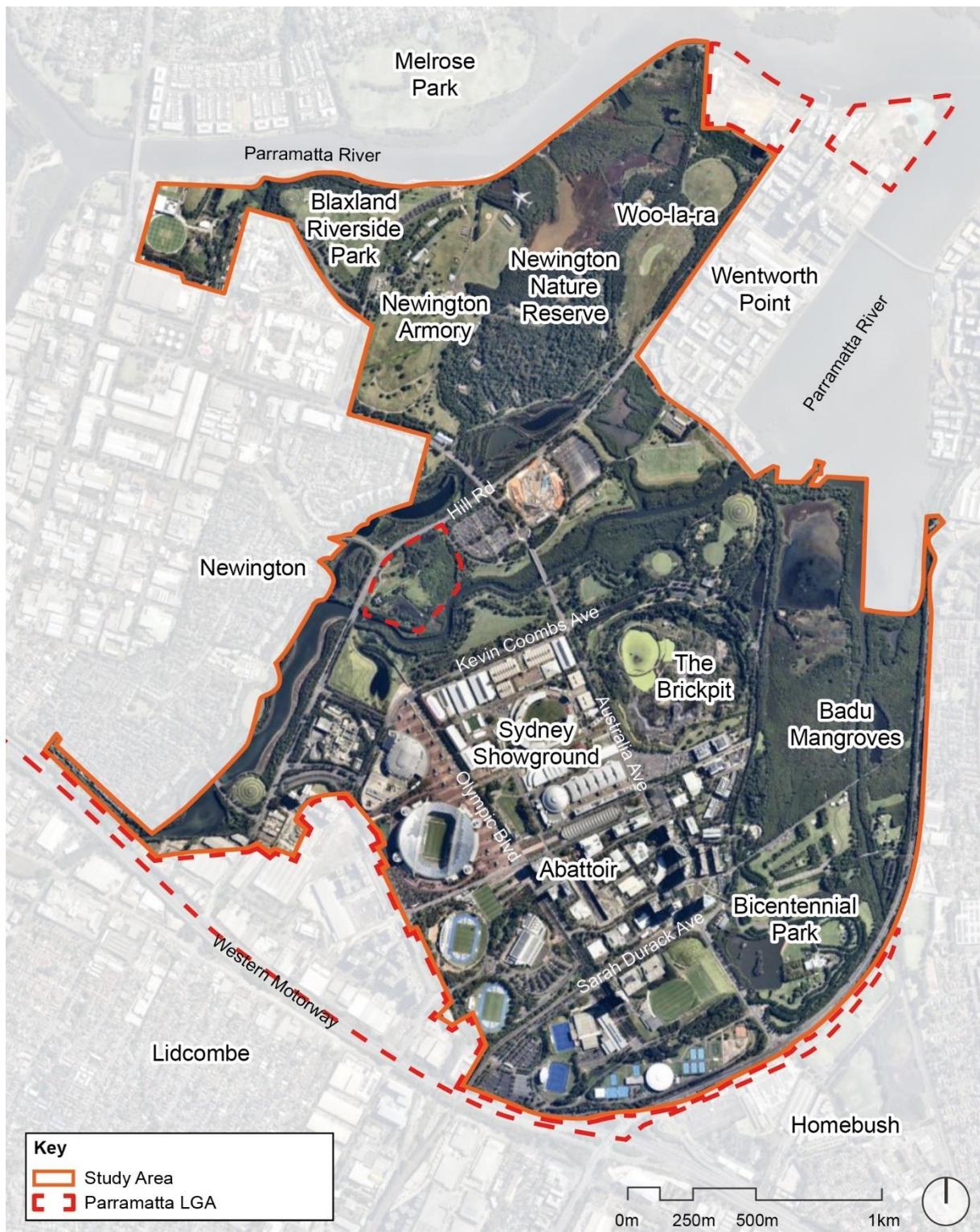


Figure 1.2 Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2050 study area. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay)

The SOP Master Plan 2050 proposes seven neighbourhoods and four parklands that will provide new uses of the existing natural and historic environment. The seven urban neighbourhoods within the study area are listed below:

- The Urban Centre;
- The Eastern Neighbourhood;
- The Southern Neighbourhood;
- Haslams Neighbourhood
- Sports and Civic Precinct;
- Stadia Precinct; and
- Edwin Flack Neighbourhood.

The three parkland character areas proposed within Sydney Olympic Park are:

- Riverfront Park;
- Haslams Park; and
- Bicentennial Park.



Figure 1.3 The proposed neighbourhoods and parklands within Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: TURF, Master Plan 2050 DRAFT, Figure 4.1)

1.3 Proposed works

This ACH study identifies Aboriginal heritage matters relevant to future development and opportunities for future research, engagement and education to support the preparation and implementation of the SOP Master Plan 2050.

The Master Plan will provide key strategic guidelines for future management of Sydney Olympic Park as part of the Central River City and in line with the goals of the Six Cities Region. There are no specific construction and/or development programs suggested at this stage.

1.4 Authors

This report was prepared by Jacob Kiefel (GML, Heritage Consultant), with review and strategic input by Dr Tim Owen (GML, Principal). Cultural comment and input were provided by Rowena Welsh-Jarrett of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metro LALC).

1.5 Endnotes

¹ Department of Environment Climate Change and Water NSW 2010, *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales*, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, Sydney.

2 Environmental and archaeological context



Source: E.A Manning 1838.

2 Environmental and archaeological context

2.1.1 Aboriginal cultural background

The land area which is now Sydney Olympic Park area was part of traditional lands occupied by the Wangal (also spelled Wann-gal) clan. The word Wann-gal translates to 'the people of Wann'.¹ Their lands stretched along the southern shore of Parramatta River between Darling Harbour (Gadigal/Cadigal land) and Rosehill (Burrattagal land). The northern shoreline of Parramatta River was home to the Wallumettagal. Homebush Bay is estimated to comprise only 15% of the approximately 100 sq km they occupied.² Their land also likely included some harbour islands since Bennelong, a Wangal man, had ownership of Memii (Goat Island).

2.1.2 'Deep Time' Aboriginal connections

Aboriginal people today describe their traditions and origins as commencing in the 'deep time'. Humans evolved from their early hominid predecessors around 250,000 years ago and we understand that the first physical evidence for Aboriginal presence in Australia dates to 65,000 years ago (Figure 2.1).³ Archaeological evidence of the long history of Aboriginal connections with Sydney span 38,000 BP, with the earliest dated archaeological sites in proximity to Sydney Olympic Park dating to 35,000 BP,⁴ during the Pleistocene epoch. Our understanding of physical Pleistocene Aboriginal cultures and traditions are limited; there are very few confirmed Pleistocene Aboriginal 'sites' in Sydney. During the Holocene (the last 11,700 years), Aboriginal society seems to have become increasingly complex with intertwined social, spiritual and economic relationships. These relationships were directly associated with the physical geography of Country.

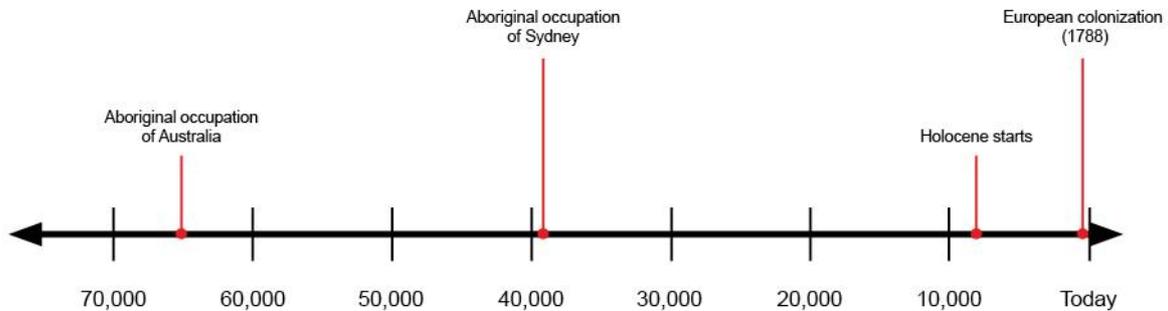


Figure 2.1 Timeline showing indicative Aboriginal occupation in Australia and then Sydney. The Holocene start date reflects the technological shift observed within Aboriginal stone artefact technology—the conventional date for the start of the Holocene is 11,700 years ago. (Source: GML 2021)

Throughout the last 35,000 years the environment has changed dramatically. Sydney Olympic Park’s landscape, watercourses, and woodlands have not been static elements. They varied considerably over time and were influenced by changing climatic conditions, including long term temperature and sea level fluctuations. If we are to understand these changes, and the effects they may have had on Aboriginal culture and society, we need to examine the deep time archaeological and paleoenvironmental record. This is challenging at Sydney Olympic Park, which mostly lacks archaeological evidence of any sort, or remnant pre-1788 sediments or soils. However, a comparative study of nearby archaeological and paleoenvironmental records, notably Parramatta, could provide an understanding of how Aboriginal connections to Sydney Olympic Park have changed through time.

Pleistocene

The Pleistocene is a geological epoch lasting from 2.58 million years BP until 11,700 BP. Across the Pleistocene, there were at least 20 glacial and interglacial cycles; a change from an ice age (with large and extensive polar ice caps) to warmer conditions when polar ice melted rapidly, and then back to colder (glacial) conditions again. Of particular importance is the Last Glacial Period, culminating in the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM; approx. 27,000-17,000 BP).⁵ Sea levels were around 120m lower, exposing the now submerged base of Homebush Bay and Australia’s continental shelf.⁶ The world’s climate was considerably colder (temperatures were 5–10 degrees Celsius colder than today’s averages⁷) and drier.

Sydney Olympic Park would have been a series of low-lying hills punctuated by two small and narrow river valleys through which Haslams and Powells creeks flowed to confluence with each other and then into the proto-Parramatta River. As shown in Figure 2.2,

significant areas of the now submerged Homebush Bay would have been dry land. Throughout the Pleistocene, Sydney Olympic Park had no estuary and no point of intersection between fresh and salt water. Therefore, these creeks were not flanked by mudflats, as they were in 1788, because the Homebush Bay estuary had not been established. Archaeological evidence from Parramatta demonstrates Aboriginal people were occupying nearby areas during this period.⁸ It is possible that Aboriginal people treated the watercourses within Sydney Olympic Park in a similar way to any other inland watercourses on the Cumberland Plain. It is unlikely that any unusual, significant or special traditional association was made with this place during the Pleistocene as there was no estuary, with its increased richness and diversity, or significant wetland habitats providing a range of different ecological zones.



Figure 2.2 Pleistocene sea levels. Derived from bathymetry data. (Source: GML 2023)

Terminal Pleistocene

The terminal Pleistocene consists of the stretch of time following the LGM until the beginning of the Holocene (approx. 17,000–11,700 BP). Following the LGM, the climate warmed, melting icesheets across the planet and causing rapid sea level rise. Sea level rise resulted in the loss of the inner continental shelf, inundating approximately 11,000 sq km of terrestrial resources. Coastal Aboriginal people were forced far inland as the

range of habitable landforms was reduced to formerly raised plains and upper ridgelines. This caused a major reorganisation of social and spatial boundaries.⁹ The terminal Pleistocene therefore represents a time of rapid climatic change which Aboriginal people were forced to adapt to.

The relatively rapid drowning of coastal plains and river valleys meant that a substantial amount of time was required for environments to stabilise and be useful for resource exploitation. The estuaries and wetlands of Sydney Olympic Park were likely not established until the early Holocene. It has been argued that it took Aboriginal societies a significant length of time to recover from these rapid climatic changes.¹⁰ The Hawkesbury-Nepean River could have been a refuge with the associated stable and elevated terraces favoured for occupation, and with much of the surrounding marginal land unused. Archaeological excavations in Parramatta have found that ephemeral visits may have been made to the area during the terminal Pleistocene but systematic use and occupation of the area did not occur until after climatic conditions stabilised.¹¹ It should be noted that these models are based on our current knowledge and understanding of the archaeological record within Sydney and it is likely future archaeological research will increase our understanding of Aboriginal occupation during this time period.

Holocene

The Holocene began around 11,700 BP and has been characterised by a wetter and warmer climate. Post-LGM sea level rise continued during the early Holocene. Current sea levels were reached around 7,700 BP and continued to rise to a high point of around 1m to 2m above today's sea level at least 7,400 BP, only receding to current levels around 1,500 BP.¹² Figure 2.3 shows the areas which would have likely been submerged during this time, derived from current flood modelling and a GIS-based analysis of the extent of reclaimed land.



Figure 2.3 Mid-Holocene sea levels, assuming a +2m sea level rise. Derived from current flood modelling and a GIS-based analysis of the extent of reclaimed land. (Source: GML 2023)

Significantly, for the first time in thousands of years, estuaries and wetlands could become established along a more constant coastline. Around 240km to 250km of resource-rich estuarine shorelines were created within Port Jackson, including the Homebush Bay estuary.¹³ The newly formed marine, estuarine and woodland ecosystems of the area would have provided abundant food, water and timber resources. Small fluctuations in temperatures and water level occurred throughout the Holocene causing small and frequent changes in sea level—1m–1.5m—each change happening within five generations.¹⁴ These changes would have repeatedly altered Sydney’s foreshores and may have influenced the point at which the fresh and salt water met in Sydney Olympic Park. The slightly higher sea levels of the middle Holocene meant brackish water could have reached further up the estuary, perhaps further upstream in Haslams and Powells creeks.¹⁵ It is possible that the use of cultural landscapes associated with the tidal point of Homebush Bay changed and that this place became a prominent part of Wangal Country and living traditions. Indeed, the distinction between saltwater and freshwater people was an inherent characteristic of Aboriginal peoples lives:

Water holds deep spiritual and cultural significance for Aboriginal [people] ... the vast network of rivers, creeks, billabongs, lakes and coastal regions found across the country represent a rich source of food and culture for Indigenous Australians ... water is central to Dreaming stories and different forms of marine life are often used as family or clan totems.¹⁶

The Holocene also signalled the beginning of a more continuous archaeological record of Aboriginal occupation within the Sydney Basin. A stabilised climate allowed for more consistent ecological communities to develop for resource exploitation across much of the Sydney Basin. This, in turn, allowed for systematic landform use which is reflected in the archaeological record. This also coincided with an increase in social and religious complexity.¹⁷ It also should be noted that much of the soils and sediments of Sydney Olympic Park were likely formed during the Holocene. For example, wetlands associated with the Birrong alluvium have been dated through associated archaeology to the Holocene at Parramatta.¹⁸ This is likely true of Sydney Olympic Park as well. Increased rainfall and water movement, caused by the Holocene's wetter climate, eroded soils on the slopes to the south and transported material to the wetlands of Sydney Olympic Park. Archaeological material within SOP is spatially associated with ecological communities, landforms and soils which would have formed during the Holocene. This indicates that the known archaeological resource of the area reflects Holocene land uses.

Sydney's archaeological record provides an enduring and extensive assemblage of Aboriginal cultural materials, which in Sydney Olympic Park are primarily in the form of stone artefacts and tools. These have been identified on elevated land adjacent to watercourses, which potentially suggests that these areas were used as campsites. The spatial relationship between Aboriginal land use and landforms adjacent to watercourses is well documented throughout the Sydney Basin, and the evidence suggests this may have been true of Sydney Olympic Park.

A traditional fishing ground north of Homebush Bay may indicate the area was visited frequently. The use of canoes in the area is recorded in early European accounts of the area. The use of timber to create bark shelters was observed by early settlers near Homebush Bay; however, the extensive disturbances to the Sydney Olympic Park area and the organic nature of the shelters mean they are rarely preserved in the archaeological record. In any case, the available archaeological and historical evidence indicates that Homebush Bay, and its surroundings, were used by Aboriginal people for resource collection and use.

Stone tools were often multipurpose, portable and were principally made from three rock material types: silcrete, quartz and IMSTC— although other rarer materials may also have been used. Sydney Olympic Park contained sources of raw silcrete materials which were likely used by Aboriginal people to manufacture stone tools. Silcrete pebbles and cobbles have been observed within a former river channel in the RANAD and an in situ silcrete source has also been recorded. It is possible that the latter source was exposed by historical development and, therefore, was inaccessible to Aboriginal people during the Holocene; however, the several isolated silcrete artefacts and possible silcrete manuports that have been identified in Sydney Olympic Park indicates silcrete was used

as a raw material in the area. The identification of a chert artefact in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is evidence that a wider variety of materials were also used.

The presence of these materials is linked to their source and the changing frequency and preferences for their use over the Holocene.¹⁹ This sequence of stone use is referred to as the Eastern Regional Sequence (ERS) with demonstrated changes over the last 10,000-plus years.²⁰ Artefact variation across Sydney may reflect changing clan and language boundaries, as well as changes to trade networks across Sydney.²¹ However, none of the stone tools identified within Sydney Olympic Park have been subject to detailed artefactual analysis which would allow for a detailed comparison. The use of silcrete and chert as materials was common in the Sydney Basin throughout the Holocene.

2.1.3 Post-1788 Aboriginal connections

Colonisation by the British in 1788 significantly disrupted Aboriginal Country and people's lives. Impacts for Aboriginal people included the loss of access to land, food and resources, exacerbated by the introduction of new diseases and colonial violence. Despite holistic changes to traditional Aboriginal lifeways, Aboriginal people maintained their connections with Country, continuing to practise and hand down cultural knowledge. In many instances Aboriginals relocated to other areas of Country and formed viable living communities. Such communities were often located on the periphery of colonial settlement. Where they could, Aboriginal people formed relationships with settler colonists. Such relationships often included Aboriginal people exchanging labour, or other resources from Country, for the opportunity to remain on their unceded land. This section provides an overview of known post-1788 connections between Aboriginal people and Sydney Olympic Park. More in-depth information can be found in the work of Emma Lee and the Aboriginal History & Connections Program (AHCP) for Sydney Olympic Park.²² The approximate locations of connections to the area are shown in Figure 2.2.

1788–1800

Less than a month after British colonists arrived in Botany Bay, exploratory missions set out westerly along Parramatta River in search of land suitable to grow and cultivate crops. Colonists first reached Homebush Bay on 5 February 1788 as part of a team led by Captain John Hunter and Lieutenant William Bradley.

These explorations of the Homebush Bay area seldom encountered Aboriginal people, as Aboriginal people knew their Country intimately and may have chosen to observe the strangers rather than engage with them. In 1789, Bradley observed six fires on the southern shoreline of Homebush Bay. This may be the first written description of an Aboriginal campsite near Homebush Bay. During the same journey, Bradley recorded

seeing six canoes fishing, potentially in the vicinity of Homebush Bay. British settler Richard Atkins went duck hunting at Homebush Bay in 1793 but did not encounter any Aboriginal people or campsites. The lack of early interactions has led some to suggest that Aboriginal people may have been avoiding the European colonists, and it seems likely that post-1788 Aboriginal people did not camp at Homebush Bay for extended periods of time.

The British settlement at Rose Hill was established on 3 November 1788. While not on Wangal lands, it was the first permanent European presence in the vicinity of Homebush Bay and would become the centre of early interactions between Europeans and the Wangal. Aboriginal people would trade fish and other resources there, with some even living there permanently. The first land grants in Sydney Olympic Park were issued in 1793, located adjacent to Powells Creek, north of Parramatta Road. The nearby Liberty Plains settlement, in modern day Lidcombe, was also established during this decade. These settlements increasingly alienated Aboriginal people from their lands, most often denying them access to practice laws and ways of life on Country.

Several early conflicts between colonists and Aboriginal people took place at Liberty Plains. Attacks on Aboriginal people are seldom recorded because the British principally recorded events when they were aggrieved. For instance, prior to 1800, one of the original settlers, Jane Rose, was speared when the family was attacked by Aboriginal people. The reason for this spearing is unknown. Fellow settler Edward Powell was also subjected to several attacks. These attacks were organised and led by Tedbury, son of Pemulwuy, and seem to have had the aim of stealing sheep from Edward.

Despite these occurrences, relations remained largely peaceable between Aboriginal people and colonial settlers at Homebush Bay and any violence that occurred was often initiated by the actions of Europeans. In 1791, Balloderry, a Wangal man, speared a convict at Homebush Bay, likely as retaliation for the deliberate destruction of his canoe by six convicts. The speared man was probably not one of the guilty parties and was not killed. While there are no other references to conflict at Homebush Bay prior to 1793, the fear of attacks by Aboriginal people, as well as bushrangers, on settlements and travellers influenced the position and layout of early settlements.

1800–1900

The early 1800s saw an increasing European presence within Sydney Olympic Park. Smaller farms were amalgamated into larger properties, the two most notable being Newington Estate, owned by the Blaxland family, and Homebush Estate, owned by the Wentworth family. Despite the increasing intensity of European occupation within Sydney Olympic Park, the Wangal continued to practice traditional ways of life. Aboriginal people are recorded using traditional bark shelters in Newington Estate as late as 1810 and fished nearby in traditional canoes into the 1840s. Relations with the Blaxlands seem to

have generally been amiable. In the 1810s, an Aboriginal child was taken by a shark and their mother told Mrs Blaxland, showing their relationship was close enough for Aboriginal people to share grief with the family. The Wangal also continued to trade fish with the Blaxlands until at least the 1830s.

A notable example of the friendships that formed between Aboriginal people and Europeans was that of James Squire and Bennelong. James Squire was a settler who ran a brewer at Kissing Point. Bennelong, a Wangal man, lived on Squire's land during the last years of his life and was buried together with his wife in Squire's orchard. Another Aboriginal man, Nanbaree, was also reported to have been buried in the same location.²³ Today much of James Squire's land is part of Bennelong Park, named to commemorate the life of Bennelong.

This period saw some of the earliest attempts to Europeanise Aboriginal people. In the 1810s, Governor Lachlan Macquarie began searching for a location to start a Native Institution (the Institute). He sought the advice of Reverend Samuel Marsden, who had previously attempted to Europeanise Aboriginal children. Marsden suggested the northern bank of Parramatta River at One Tree Point, opposite the traditional fishing location in Homebush Bay. This location may have been a campsite, possibly into the 1830s, which could explain why this location was recommended. Governor Macquarie would instead choose Parramatta as the location for the Institute, which was opened in 1814. This was the first government sponsored attempt to 'civilise' Aboriginal people. Wangal children were among those admitted to the Institute.

With the increasing intensity of colonial settlement in Sydney Olympic Park, Aboriginal access to land, food, water and other resources was drastically limited. There is very little information about how Aboriginal people lived within the area during the late-nineteenth century. The nearby 'Kissing Point', 'Duck River' and 'Concord' tribes are well documented and may have included, or been entirely, Wangal people.

In 1883, the establishment of the Aboriginal Protection Board in NSW signalled the beginning of successive waves of intervention into Aboriginal lives. Protectionism, segregation, assimilation and self-determination are the core themes that characterised government policies towards Aboriginal people. However, Aboriginal people remained in Sydney and were joined by other Aboriginal people from across NSW to live, work and forge new lives in urban communities.

1900–1990

Sydney Olympic Park became increasingly industrialised throughout the twentieth century as abattoirs, brickworks, metal workshops and other industrial sites became established in the area. These industries provided significant employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, who were, for example, recorded as working at the NSW State

Abattoirs from as early as the 1930s. By this time, the migration of Aboriginal people had become far more common, a migration that continues today.

Employment was not the only reason Aboriginal people stayed in Homebush Bay. Newington Asylum, a 'benevolent asylum' for aged women, treated several Aboriginal people. David Kerrin, a child from the Northern Territory, was sent to Homebush in the late 1940s to stay under the care of the nuns at St Lucy's School. Aboriginal people would also frequently travel to Homebush Bay to collect materials such as bird eggs or reeds. There are records of Aboriginal men from La Perouse collecting mangrove wood from Homebush Bay during the 1940s and 1950s. This wood was used to make 'traditional artefacts' to sell to tourists.

Aboriginal people have been among the inmates at the Silverwater Correction Centre since it opened in the 1960s. Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented within the Australian prison system, and they are also far more likely to die in custody. Sadly, there are at least two recorded deaths in this complex of prisons. The AHCP does record some oral accounts describing positive experiences of time spent in the prison complexes. Aboriginal inmates have created Aboriginal art and music, and some have participated in vocational programs. Some Aboriginal people have also been employed by the prisons as, for example, trade workers.

1990–present

Aboriginal leaders were promised that Aboriginal people and culture would be represented during Sydney's bid for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. When the bid was won, policies relating to Aboriginal employment and involvement were developed that focused on activities such as regular consultation, sporting scholarships and the creation of an Aboriginal cultural centre. Aboriginal people were heavily involved in the development process in a wide variety of roles, including land clearing, construction, hospitality, customer service and as liaison officers. These developments also drove increased research into Aboriginal cultural heritage within Sydney Olympic Park, including many archaeological assessments. This research has formed the basis of our understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage and archaeology in the area, as well as informed interpretation and education strategies. These research efforts were subsequently built upon by the AHCP, which provides the most comprehensive overview of Aboriginal cultural connections to Sydney Olympic Park to date.

The Pacific School Games were held just prior to the Sydney 2000 Games and involved an Aboriginal-themed opening ceremony that was based on work by Aboriginal artist Bronwyn Bancroft. The Sydney 2000 Games also involved several ceremonies incorporating Aboriginal culture and people. The opening ceremony is the most well-known; the 'Awakening' segment involved 1,100 Aboriginal dancers from throughout Australia. An official welcoming ceremony for athletes consisted of a traditional Aboriginal

welcome dance performed by Aboriginal children. Aboriginal athletes were among those who competed, most notably Cathy Freeman, Patrick Johnson and Nova Peris.

During the Sydney 2000 Games, the Aboriginal Arts and Culture Pavilion was created to educate visitors on many aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture. Although it was dismantled following the games despite efforts to ensure a permanent presence by the Metro LALC, Aboriginal culture and, specifically, the Wangal people continue to be represented in other ways. The 'Games Memories' poles, erected outside the stadium, commemorate those involved in the Sydney 2000 Games. Several of these poles contain references to Aboriginal culture and people, such as the 'Namarali from Lulim' and 'Gathering' poles. Other poles outline the history of the Wangal people at Homebush Bay, and the nationally significant achievements of Cathy Freeman.

Perhaps the most visible way the Wangal people are recognised at Sydney Olympic Park is through the naming, or renaming, of locations. For example, Bennelong Parkway is named after Bennelong, a Wangal man, and a large remediation mound in the north of Sydney Olympic Park is named Woo-la-ra after the local Aboriginal word for 'lookout'. Several existing precincts and parklands have also been given Aboriginal names, such as the Badu mangroves and Nuwi Wetland.

SOPA continues to engage with the Aboriginal community through a wide variety of programs. One of the most recent efforts to provide recognition and education regarding Aboriginal cultural heritage within Sydney Olympic Park is the Wangal Walk and Murama Dance Ground. Located along the foreshore of Parramatta River, the Wangal Walk consists of displays, artworks and a yarning circle developed in collaboration with the Murama Healing Circle, formerly the Murama Cultural Council. These displays aim to educate the public about a wide range of issues relating to Aboriginal cultural heritage across Australia. Several youth summits, a bush regeneration group and other activities have also been organised by the Murama Cultural Council, involving hundreds of school children from throughout Sydney.



2.2 Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System

A search of the Heritage NSW AHIMS database was undertaken on 5 April 2023, reference number 23-0043 (Appendix A). The search covered the area from 33.8723, 151.0088 (latitude, longitude) to -33.801, 151.1324 (latitude, longitude). The results of the search are shown in Table 2.1, Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4. A total of 116 Aboriginal sites/places were identified, of which five have been ‘destroyed’ and 11 have been partially destroyed.

All Aboriginal sites are included in these results as they provide useful information about the distribution of Aboriginal archaeology. Five sites in the AHIMS database are not recorded as Aboriginal sites and so they have been excluded from this analysis.

One restricted Aboriginal site was present within the AHIMS search boundary; however, this was confirmed as being outside the study area and has been excluded from this analysis.

Table 2.1 Results of the AHIMS search.

Site Type	Frequency	Percentage
Artefact site	28	25.45%
Shell midden with artefact	18	16.36%

Site Type	Frequency	Percentage
Open camp site	15	13.64%
Potential archaeological deposit (PAD)	13	11.82%
PAD with artefact	9	8.18%
Shelter with midden and artefact	8	7.27%
Shelter with art	4	3.64%
Shell midden	4	3.64%
Grinding groove	3	2.73%
Shell midden	3	2.73%
Rock engraving	3	2.73%
Burial/s with midden and artefact	1	0.91%
Shell midden with art	1	0.91%
Grand total	110	100.00%

There are five registered AHIMS sites within the study area. Three of these [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are isolated stone artefacts found near or within the [REDACTED]. These artefacts were identified during a survey conducted as part of the AHCP in 2003. Correspondence with SOPA during the preparation of this report noted that during the initial survey there were concerns that one of these isolated finds may have been imported to the site as road base. This concern is not recorded in the AHIMS site cards or in any AHCP reports available to us which suggests that it was deemed more likely the artefact was local to the area. An additional silcrete artefact was identified along the eastern edge of the woodland during an archaeological survey in 1995; however, it has not been located since. Other isolated finds within Sydney Olympic Park include three silcrete artefacts identified on the Olympic Village site (these were likely destroyed during its construction) and a stone axe found in the backyard of a house adjacent to Powells Creek.

Artefact sites were the most common site type identified in the AHIMS search (25.45 per cent of sites). Artefacts are generally found on the surface, within A topsoil horizons or otherwise suitable sedimentary deposits. Much of Sydney Olympic Park, as well as nearby suburbs such as Canada Bay and Strathfield, has been heavily disturbed by historical activities. Deposits with the potential to contain Aboriginal archaeological material have largely been removed by these actions (refer to Section 2.3).

Previous studies throughout Sydney have noted the strong association between artefact sites and permanent watercourses. Most artefact sites are located on the foreshores of

the Parramatta and Duck rivers and artefacts within Sydney Olympic Park have been identified on elevated ground surfaces adjacent to watercourses. Sydney Olympic Park contains, and is surrounded by, several permanent waterbodies which constitute a reliable source of food and water. The presence of artefact sites in proximity to water may indicate areas where Aboriginal people commonly camped. However, most artefact sites have been found within, or near, the [REDACTED], which has been noted as having relatively little historical disturbance. As such, the distribution of artefact finds in Sydney Olympic Park may reflect historical disturbances rather than prior Aboriginal land uses. In all instances, the presence of artefact sites depends on the degree of historical disturbance to soils and sediments that have the potential to retain archaeological material.

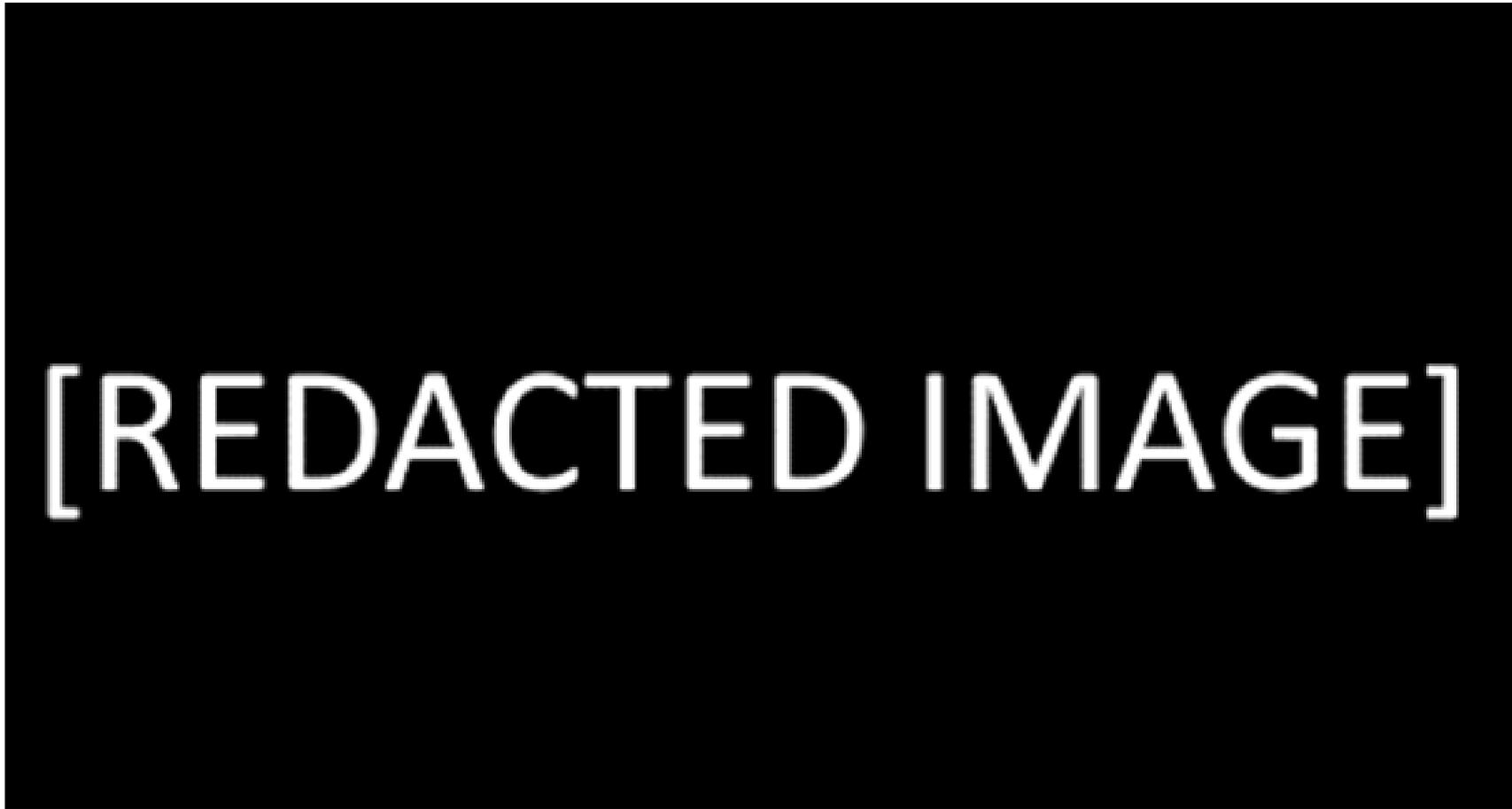
Similarly, the identification of an area with potential archaeological deposits (PADs) is dependent on the presence of suitable soil and/or sedimentary deposits that hold the potential to retain archaeological material. Two PADs are registered in the study area [REDACTED] and all three isolated artefact sites were registered in connection to PAD areas. All are within the [REDACTED], in areas that potentially retain remnant A topsoil horizons. We note that a PAD is not actually an Aboriginal site; it is an area designated with potential for buried Aboriginal objects. None of the Sydney Olympic Park PADs have been the subject of archaeological test excavation and their subsurface content and possible extents are unknown.

Also abundant in the AHIMS search results are middens (about 20 per cent), which are often associated with stone artefacts and shelters. Spatially, they are associated with permanent sources of water and near locations with a plentiful and reliable supply of shellfish. Middens are especially abundant on the northern foreshores of Parramatta River, with lower concentrations on its southern shore. Though prevalent, it is likely that the distribution of midden material is underrepresented in the archaeological record. The substantial lime manufacturing industry (1788–1800s) utilised shell taken from Aboriginal middens and involved excavating and removing a large quantity of midden material, though the extent to which this occurred in Sydney Olympic Park is disputed. In general, intact portions of shoreline around Sydney Harbour can be assumed to have potential for middens.

Other site types will not be found in the study area. Sandstone rock shelters are common throughout Sydney Harbour and are frequently associated with artefacts (shell and stone) and grinding grooves, and occasionally with traditional human burials and art (engraved or painted). Shelters are found in topographies that feature cliffs or escarpments where rock overhangs or caves can be used, such as in the outcrops of Hawkesbury sandstone along the foreshores of Parramatta River. However, Sydney Olympic Park is not located near to any sandstone outcrops of this nature and, therefore, sandstone shelters are not associated with the study area.

An axe-marked tree has been recorded in the [REDACTED], adjacent to isolated artefact [REDACTED]. This is registered in AHIMS as [REDACTED] however, it is not an Aboriginal site. It was registered following the reassessment of several 'culturally scarred trees' that found that the scars were not Aboriginal in origin, but rather were the result of European land management practices. To clarify the actual origin of the scars, this site is listed as an axe-marked tree and not as a culturally modified scarred tree.





2.3 Relevant local literature

Preparing this report has required compiling, reviewing and synthesising much of the existing information on the Aboriginal cultural heritage and archaeology of Sydney Olympic Park. The relevant documentation identified for each sub-precinct is listed in Table 2.2.

The Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity of Sydney Olympic Park has been comprehensively assessed and much of the area has been determined to have nil-to-low archaeological potential due to the high intensity of historical development. The [REDACTED] is an exception, with three isolated artefacts and two PADs registered in the AHIMS database. This area has been identified as the only location in Sydney Olympic Park to retain natural soil profiles. Figure 2.5 shows an Aboriginal archaeological zoning plan produced by Paul Irish in 2006. Most of the sources listed in Table 2.3 exclusively assess the Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity of their respective project areas and are a combination of desktop assessment and/or archaeological field surveys. No Aboriginal archaeological excavations have taken place within Sydney Olympic Park.

A lack of archaeological information, in addition to relatively little historical documentation, means that we have a poor understanding of the pre-1788 cultural landscape of Sydney Olympic Park. Assessments of these values often apply information derived from nearby areas in Sydney to Sydney Olympic Park. The Pleistocene and early-mid Holocene cultural landscapes are very rarely touched upon and no comprehensive analysis of these eras has been undertaken.

The post-1788 Aboriginal cultural and social connections to Sydney Olympic Park have been primarily assessed through the research of the AHCP at Sydney Olympic Park from 2001 to 2005. The evolving relationship between Sydney Olympic Park and local Aboriginal peoples across the last 20 years has rarely been assessed, and only within academic literature.

Table 2.2 List of relevant documentation by neighbourhood/parkland.

Neighbourhood/parkland	Relevant documentation
Sydney Olympic Park overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fox & Associates 1986, <i>Homebush Bay Conservation Study</i>. • Attenbrow, V 1990, <i>The Port Jackson Archaeological Project</i>. • Lee, E and Darwala-Lia 1998, <i>Aboriginal History of Homebush Bay Olympic Site</i>. • Lee, E 1999, <i>Histories of Homebush Bay and the Sydney Aboriginal Fight for Recognition</i>. • Lee, E and Lennis, J 2000, <i>Aboriginal People at Homebush Bay—A Report on the Flora and Fauna, and the Activities of Men, Women and Children</i>.

Neighbourhood/parkland	Relevant documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish, P 2002, <i>Archaeological Research Directions: A report based on the findings of Stage 1 of the Aboriginal History & Connections Program at the Sydney Olympic Parklands.</i> Irish, P 2005, <i>Aboriginal People at Homebush Bay: From the Wann-gal to the present day.</i> Irish, P 2006, <i>Sydney Olympic Park: Aboriginal Archaeological Zoning Plan.</i> White, L 2013, 'Cathy Freeman and Australia's Indigenous heritage: a new beginning for an old nation at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games', <i>International Journal of Heritage Studies</i> 19 (2), pp 153–170.
Urban neighbourhoods	
Urban Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dominic Steele & Martin Carney Archaeological Management and Consulting Group 1997, <i>Aboriginal Heritage, Australia Avenue, Fig Tree Circuit, 2000 Olympic Site, Homebush NSW.</i> Urbis 2016, <i>Historic and Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment, 2 Figtree Drive, Sydney Olympic Park.</i> Artefact Heritage 2020, <i>Sydney Metro West, Stage 1— Technical Paper 4: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report.</i>
Eastern Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artefact Heritage 2018, <i>1 & 2 Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park Archaeological Survey Report.</i>
Southern Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artefact Heritage 2016, <i>Site 9, Sydney Olympic Park: Archaeological Assessment.</i>
Haslams Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Sports and Civic Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carney, M 1998, <i>Olympic Tennis Centre Archaeological Impact Assessment.</i> Kelleher Nightingale Consultants 2014, <i>Westconnex M4 Widening Pitt Street, Parramatta to Homebush Bay Drive, Homebush: Aboriginal Archaeology Survey Report.</i>
Stadia Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Edwin Flack Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Parklands	
Riverfront Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fox & Associates 1986, <i>Parramatta River Foreshore Study.</i> Cosmos Archaeology Pty Ltd 2005, <i>Blaxland Common & Newington Armory Wharf, Sydney Olympic Park: Archaeological Assessment.</i> Irish, P 2005, <i>Aboriginal Heritage Impact Assessment Report: Blaxland Common and Newington Wharf Project.</i> Paton, R et al 1995, <i>RANAD Aboriginal Archaeological Survey.</i>

Neighbourhood/parkland	Relevant documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish, P 2004, 'When Is a Scar a Scar? Evaluating Scarred and Marked Trees at Sydney Olympic Park', <i>Australian Archaeology</i> 59, pp 59–61. • Irish, P 2004, <i>Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment Report, Newington Armoury Adaptive Re-use and Rail Extension Project, Sydney Olympic Park</i>. • Australian Museum Business Services 2012, <i>Newington Armament Depot & Nature Reserve, Sydney Olympic Park—Aboriginal Heritage Assessment</i>. • Tanner Architects 2013, <i>Newington Armament Depot and Nature Reserve, Sydney Olympic Park: Conservation Management Plan, Volume One</i>. • Simon, H 2020, <i>The Murama Healing Space, Sydney Olympic Park: Key learnings from an Indigenous-led engagement at a site of urban adaptive re-use</i>, Master of Research Thesis, Macquarie University.
Haslams Ecopark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umwelt 2017, <i>Heritage Desktop Assessment Wave Park Group</i>.
Bicentennial Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Nearby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McDonald, J 1990, <i>Parramatta River Ferry Terminal Survey</i>. • Godden Mackay Heritage Consultants 1997, <i>Olympic Village Site, Newington, Homebush Bay: Aboriginal Archaeology</i>.



Figure 2.7 The 2006 Paul Irish Aboriginal archaeological zoning plan for Sydney Olympic Park. This archaeological zoning plan has been supported by the results of all subsequent Aboriginal archaeological assessments undertaken within Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: Irish 2006, Figure 6.1)

2.4 Landscape context

This section provides information about the environmental context for use in developing a predictive model of Aboriginal site locations in or near the study area. Interactions between people and their surroundings are of integral importance in both the initial formation and the subsequent preservation of the archaeological record. The nature and availability of resources, including water, flora and fauna, and suitable raw materials for the manufacture of stone tools and other items, had—and continues to have—a significant influence over the way in which people use the landscape.

Alterations to the natural environment also impact upon the preservation and integrity of cultural materials that may have been deposited, while current vegetation and erosional regimes affect the visibility and detectability of Aboriginal sites and objects. For these reasons, we consider the environmental context in detail.

2.4.1 Geology and soils

Sydney Olympic Park is underlain by Ashfield Shales—a subdivision of the Wianamatta Group characterised by black and dark grey shale, laminite and siltstone. This geology was eroded by small watercourses millions of years ago to create Sydney Olympic Park's low undulating topography. This geology also provides the parent material for the two main soil landscapes in the area: the Blacktown and Birrong soil landscapes.

The Blacktown soil landscape is present on the mid–upper slopes and hilltops found in the southern reaches of Sydney Olympic Park. It is a residual soil landscape formed from the in situ weathering of the underlying geology (in this case shale). Soils tend to be shallow to moderately deep (up to 1m) red-brown podzolic soils on crests, grading to deeper yellow podzolic soils on lower slopes and drainage lines.²⁵ In a residual soil landscape, any archaeological deposits found would initially have been deposited on the ground surface before being worked down into the soils through natural processes such as bioturbation. Archaeology tends to be restricted to upper A topsoil horizons as there is usually no mechanism for the deeper penetration of material through the profile. As these soils do not accumulate as deposited layers over time, they do not contain stratified deposits.

Much of the remaining low-lying areas of Sydney Olympic Park are mapped as part of the Birrong soil landscape. This is a depositional soil landscape formed from the deposition of alluvial material derived from Wianamatta Group bedrock geologies. It is commonly found in floodplains and lowlands, and soils tend to be deep (more than 2.5m) and consist largely of yellow silty deposits overlying mottled clays. These soils have generally been formed over the last 10,000 years, which means they have formed or been set down concurrently with Aboriginal occupation of SOP.²⁶ They develop as deposited layers

over time, which means that archaeology recovered from within the soil profile could be stratified, with older archaeology located deeper in the soil profile and younger archaeology being found near today's ground surface.²⁷

There are two narrow bands of the Ettalong soil landscape, one north of Haslams Creek and another south of Parramatta River. These are swamps consisting of deep organic acid peats, peaty podzols and/or humic podzols that often overlie buried siliceous sands. The swampy environment that this soil landscape is representative of is generally considered to be unsuitable for any continuous, or even itinerant, Aboriginal occupation that would have resulted in an archaeological signature. Therefore, these soils hold no archaeological potential.

Sydney Olympic Park is a highly modified landscape with large areas of reclaimed mudflat and/or estuarine areas. Historical aerial imagery demonstrates that most of the area mapped as part of the Birrong and Ettalong soil landscapes is reclaimed land. As such, much of Sydney Olympic Park is underlain by introduced historical fills and constructed soils, neither of which hold any archaeological potential. Any Birrong and/or Ettalong soil deposits on reclaimed lands have likely developed since these modifications to the landscape and are not reflective of the pre-twentieth century character of the soils. The extensive industrial, commercial and residential land uses in the area will also have disturbed or destroyed natural soil profiles that would have had the potential to retain archaeological deposits. Remnant Blacktown topsoils were identified in the south of Sydney Olympic Park during historical archaeological excavations in the 1990s, however, these profiles have likely been removed by subsequent development.²⁸ This is reflected in the stretches of disturbed terrain mapped in the north-west of the study area and east of Powells Creek.

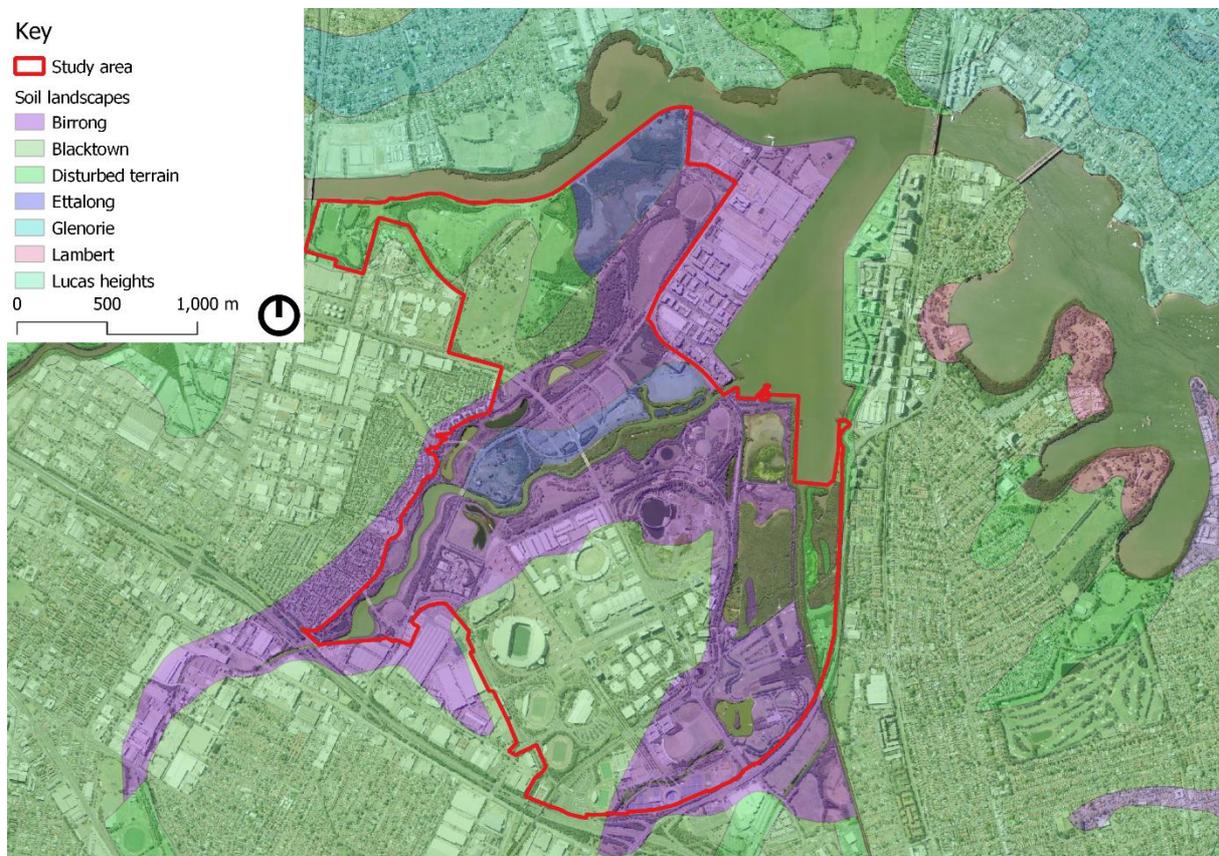


Figure 2.8 Soil landscapes of the study area. (Source: Six Maps with GML Overlay)

2.4.2 Landforms and landscape features

Sydney Olympic Park is characterised by a relatively flat topography dominated by several waterbodies: Parramatta River to the north, Duck River to the west, Homebush Bay and Powells Creek to the east and Haslams Creek in its centre. In 1788, these would have been small, narrow channels lined with extensive mudflats. The only dry land in Homebush Bay was a small island known as Arrowanelly (or Mud Island).

The surrounding land is low, flat and flood prone. The only significant relief in the area is provided by two ridgelines that flank Haslams Creek. To the west, a ridgeline rises 10m in height and extends into the [REDACTED] with a spur extending north into the Newington Armory wharf. To the east, a ridgeline ran south towards the stadium, although it has been largely excavated as a brick quarry. Most of the recorded archaeological finds in Sydney Olympic Park have been found on, or adjacent to, these ridgelines, particularly to the west of Haslams Creek. It has therefore been suggested that these landforms may have been a focus for Aboriginal activity, potentially as campsite locations.

The nature and character of the landscape has been drastically altered by land reclamation, industrial land use and construction. Industrial, commercial and residential developments throughout the area will have involved works, such as levelling, excavation and landscaping, that have substantially altered the landscape. Land reclamation works have reduced the Homebush Bay wetlands to an estimated one-sixth of their original size and the highest points in the landscape are remediation mounds. These disturbances significantly reduce the potential for intact archaeological material. There is a high chance that the soils, and any archaeological material they contained, have been significantly disturbed and likely removed.

2.4.3 Hydrology

The availability of water has significant implications for the range of resources available and the suitability of an area for human occupation. An area's proximity to water affected access to food and water resources and defines the types of landforms present. This, in turn, affects the type and nature of associated archaeological assemblages. Sydney Olympic Park contains, or is adjacent to, several waterbodies including Parramatta River, Duck River, Powells Creek, Haslams Creek and Homebush Bay. The study area today reflects post-1788 landform modification and land reclamation, resulting in a drastically altered hydrology when compared to the Pleistocene and Holocene.

In 1788, the watercourses of the area would have been shallow, brackish channels flanked by mudflats. This estuarine environment would have supported rich ecological communities, with abundant food and timber resources. The presence of a traditional fishing spot north of Homebush Bay demonstrates the significance of these resources. As the channels were brackish, they would not have been a source of fresh water. However, the presence of natural springs and small runoff channels throughout Sydney Olympic Park would mean it is unlikely that Aboriginal people avoided the area for this reason.

The natural hydrology of the landscape has been substantially modified by historical activities. These impacts would have had a significant impact on the flow of sediments and water through the landscape and thus the deposition of soils and sediment deposits. Homebush Bay has been significantly reduced due to land reclamation and its two tributaries, Haslams and Powells creeks, have been infilled, canalised and modified. Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show the degree of land reclamation, demonstrating the significantly altered hydrology of the area. The canalisation of Powells Creek in the 1930s resulted in massively increased sedimentation in Haslams Creek, which itself was artificially extended in a concrete channel for stormwater management purposes. As a result, the soils and sediments of Sydney Olympic Park rarely reflect the natural hydrological processes of the landscape. For example, the slopes west of Haslams Creek no longer retain alluvial or fluvial material reflective of regular inundation during the Holocene.

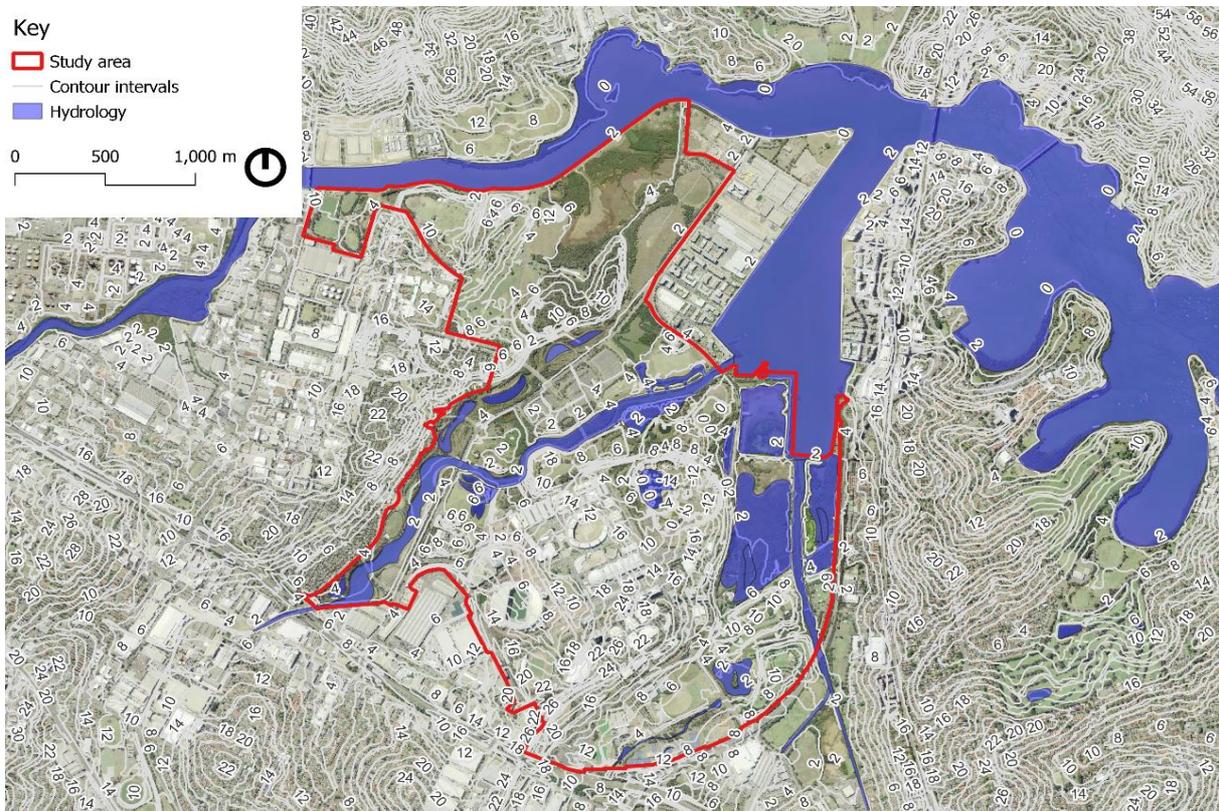


Figure 2.9 Modern (2023) hydrology and contours across the study area. (Source: Six Maps with GML Overlay)

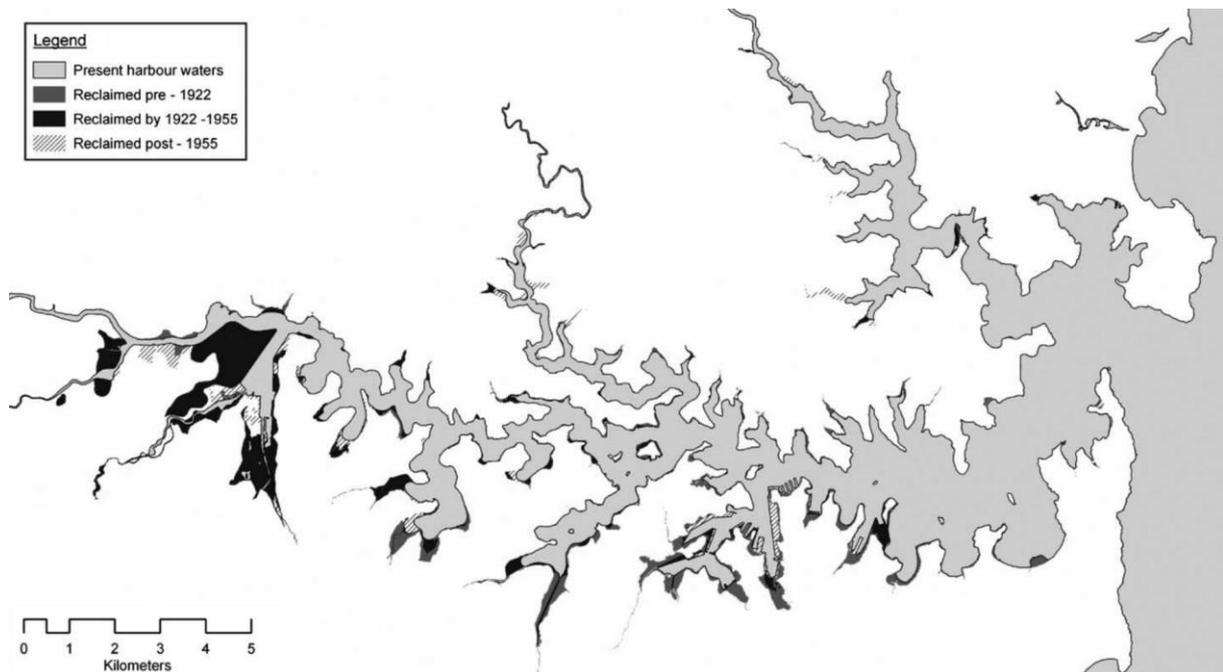


Figure 2.10 Reclamation in the Sydney estuary. Note the extensive reclamation visible within Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: Birch et al 2009; Figure 8)

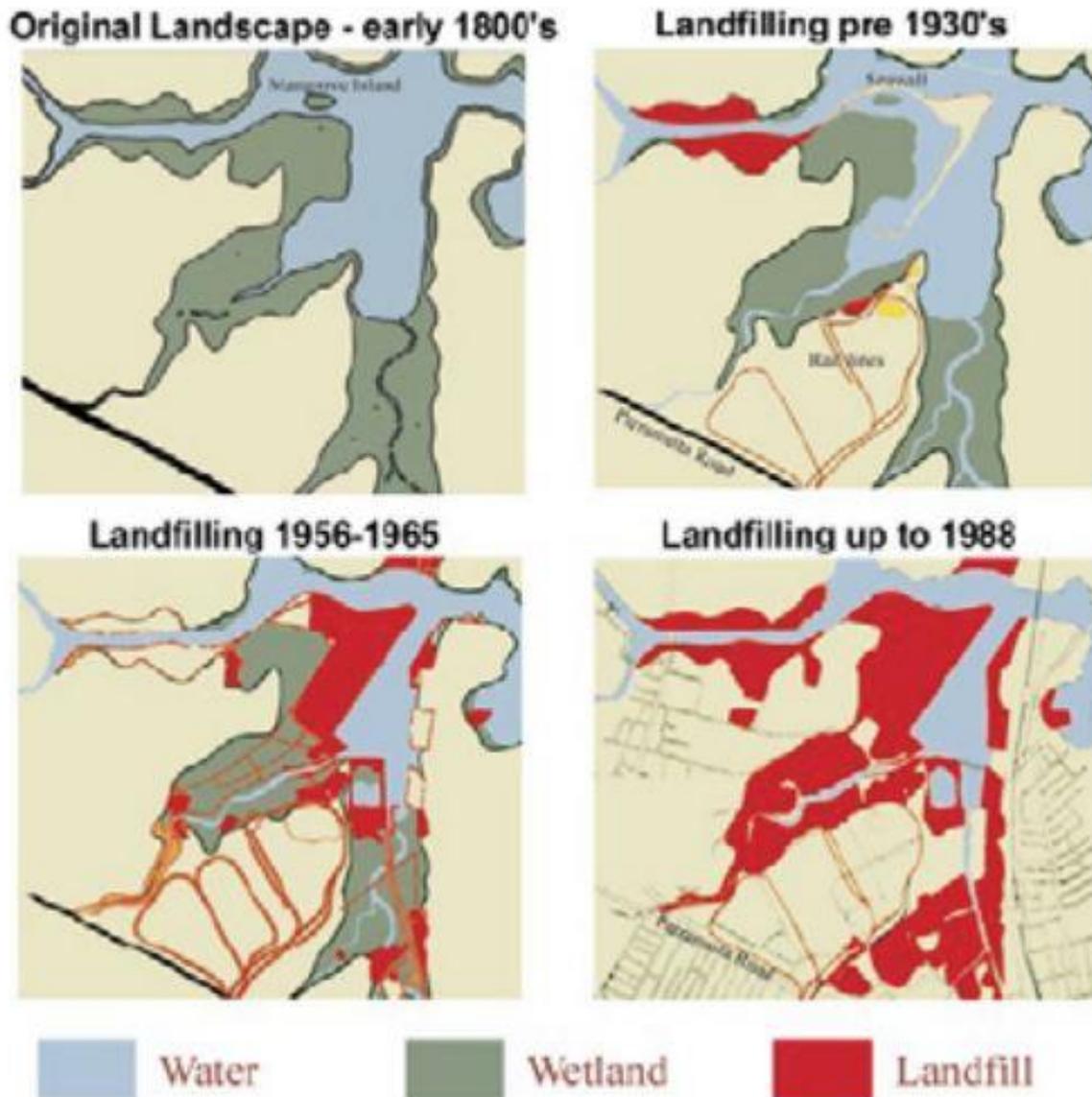


Figure 2.11 Timeline of reclaimed land within Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: Sydney Olympic Park: Standard Teacher Resource Kit 2020, p 20)

2.4.4 Fauna and flora

The exact nature of the pre-1788 ecology of Sydney Olympic Park is difficult to reconstruct as historical activities have had a disastrous effect on the region’s ecological communities. However, the estuarine waterbodies and mudflats would have supported a rich ecosystem of animals and plants. Species observed in the early colonial period include snapper, garfish, mullet and bream. Port Jackson Glassfish are also known to be present in Homebush Bay. The entrance of Homebush Bay was a regular fishing spot for the Wangal people, demonstrating the importance of these resources. Shellfish such as

rock oysters, cockles, hairy mussels and mud whelks would be found on the mudflats. Birds would also have been common, particularly ducks, as is reflected in the name of Duck River.

Today, the wetlands at Homebush Bay are home to Sydney’s largest remaining mangrove forest and the second largest saltmarsh community. Mangrove forests, such as the Badu mangroves, are dominated by grey mangrove (*Avicennia marina*), beaded samphire (*Salicornia quinqueflora*) and river oak (*Casuarina glauca*). Although extensive today, these mangroves would have been far less numerous in 1788 and the earliest definitive mention of their presence near Powells Creek is not until 1843. Saltmarsh communities consist of *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, *Sueada australis* and *Juncus kraussii*. The significant presence of weeds such as *Juncus acutus* illustrates the disturbed nature of these ecological communities.

Mixed open ironbark and/or turpentine woodland with no grasses or understorey would have been present on land. The Newington Nature Reserve provides one of the last surviving remnants of this ecological community, although the small trees, shrubs and grasses of its understorey are likely the result of historical land management practices. Common species of trees include turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*), grey ironbark (*Eucalyptus paniculate*), broad-leaved ironbark (*Eucalyptus fibrosa*), scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus haemastoma*) and white stringybark (*Eucalyptus globoidea*). Species known to be used by Aboriginal people, such as parrot-pea (*Dillwynia parvifolia*) and woollybutt (*Eucalyptus longifolia*), are also found. Animals such as kangaroos, dingoes and possums were common, in addition to a wide variety of mammal, bird, reptile and insect species.

2.5 Endnotes

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- ¹¹ GML Heritage 2022 Parramatta Light Rail. Aboriginal Archaeology Post-Excavation Report. Unpublished report to Parramatta Connect.
- ¹² Switzer, A.D., Sloss, C.R., Jones, B.G., Bristow, C.S., 2009, 'Geomorphic evidence for mid-late Holocene higher sea level from southeastern Australia', *Quaternary International*.
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3 Study area analysis

Source: Trove

<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-142184384/view?searchTerm=sydney+olympic+park#search/sydney%20olympic%20park>

3 Study area analysis

3.1 Modern land use history

Less than a month after British colonists arrived in Botany Bay, exploratory missions were sent west along Parramatta River. Europeans first reached Homebush Bay on 5 February 1788 as part of a team led by Captain John Hunter and Lieutenant Williams Bradley. The area was dominated by extensive mudflats, with small narrow channels winding through them. In fact, Homebush Bay was known to early colonists as ‘the Flats’. The surrounding dry land would have likely been mixed open ironbark and/or turpentine woodlands, like those found in the [REDACTED]. Patches of dry and/or wet sclerophyll forests may also have been present, as they are across much of the Blacktown soil landscape.

The first land grants in the area that became Sydney Olympic Park were issued in the 1790s, marking the beginning of successive phases of intensive non-Aboriginal land use and modification. Early settlers cleared the native woodlands for grazing, which remained the main land use in the area for much of the nineteenth century. There is also evidence that much of the Homebush Bay mangroves were cleared by early settlers, potentially for household use as timber or fuel. Initial land clearance and stock grazing would have resulted in minor disturbances to topsoils and left the soils more vulnerable to erosion. Increased sedimentation occurred within the watercourses of the area.

From the 1880s onwards, Sydney Olympic Park became increasingly urbanised as industrial activities such as the brickworks, abattoirs and metal working expanded into the area. Construction and development throughout Sydney Olympic Park intensified and significantly altered the landscape by excavating, levelling and infilling entire landforms. Notably, the Brickpit involved the wholesale excavation of the north-south ridgeline east of Haslams Creek. 1930 aerial photographs show that Sydney Olympic Park was almost completely cleared of native woodlands for pasture to the north-west, with industrial land uses common to the south and east of Homebush Bay (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).



Figure 3.1 1930 aerial of Sydney Olympic Park. Note that most of the area is submerged beneath Homebush Bay, with the presence of industrial buildings to the south and cleared land to northwest. (Source: NSW Spatial Collaboration Portal 2022 with GML Overlay)

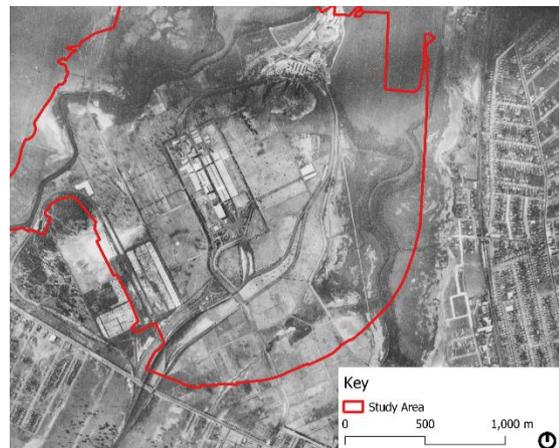


Figure 3.2 1930 aerial of southern Sydney Olympic Park. Note the heavy industrial land uses in the area, such as the Brickpit. (Source: NSW Spatial Collaboration Portal 2022 with GML Overlay)

To accommodate the increasing intensity of land use, extensive land reclamation works were undertaken during the early–mid twentieth century. These works have reduced the wetland areas of Homebush Bay to an estimated one-sixth of their original size, replaced by historical fills, constructed soils and industrial waste. Haslams and Powells creeks were canalised and straightened for stormwater management purposes and Haslams Creek was extended almost 700m northeast in a concrete channel. The canalisation of Powells Creek had a particularly dramatic effect on the natural hydrology of the area as it triggered massively increased sedimentation in Haslams Creek and south-west Homebush Bay.

1965 aerial photography demonstrates the large-scale impacts of these landform modifications and the increasingly intense industrial use of the area (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). Many new roads, industrial and commercial buildings, and associated landscaping and service installation works have occurred. All these works would have involved the levelling and excavation of landforms and the complete removal of topsoils throughout much of the area. Industry remained the primary land use within SOP until the late-twentieth century.



Figure 3.3 1965 aerial of Sydney Olympic Park. Extensive areas of the Homebush Bay wetlands have been reclaimed, and both Powells and Haslams creeks are canalised in concrete. (Source: NSW Spatial Collaboration Portal 2022 with GML Overlay)



Figure 3.4 1965 aerial of Sydney Olympic Park. (Source: NSW Spatial Collaboration Portal 2022 with GML Overlay)

In the 1990s, Sydney won the bid to host the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games and a suite of development, rehabilitation and rejuvenation works were implemented across Sydney Olympic Park to prepare it for the games. Roads, sporting venues, parklands, public spaces and associated structures were constructed throughout the area (Figure 3.5). These activities will have further disturbed, or removed entirely, intact soil profiles and any archaeology within them. Archaeological and geotechnical investigations undertaken to enable these works generally found that decades of industry had left Sydney Olympic Park heavily contaminated with almost no natural soils or sediments. The [REDACTED] was noted, by both archaeologists and environmental scientists, as the only area which retains expressions of natural soil profiles, which is reflected in the AHIMS registration of PADs there.



Figure 3.5 2004 aerial photograph of Sydney Olympic Park. Note the construction of facilities for the Sydney 2000 Games. (Source: NSW Spatial Collaboration Portal 2022 with GML Overlay)

Following the Sydney 2000 Games, the area has continued to undergo intense development, largely driven by increasing demand for residential housing, continued remediation efforts and building upgrades. This further reduces the potential that intact, or truncated, natural soils are retained across most of Sydney Olympic Park.

4 Study area inspection



Source: Christopher Adams
<https://www.alltrails.com/en-gb/parks/australia/new-south-wales/newington-nature-reserve/river>

4 Study area inspection

4.1 Metropolitan LALC consultation

A study area inspection was undertaken by Jacob Kiefel and Rowena Welsh-Jarrett from the Metropolitan LALC on 19 May 2023. This inspection focused on the Wangal Walk and Murama Dance Ground as prominent examples of interpretive display and community engagement related to Aboriginal cultural heritage. The purpose of this inspection was to examine the current conditions of Sydney Olympic Park, as well as former land uses and development activities and how they may have impacted the archaeological resource of the area. Previous archaeological and cultural heritage research was also discussed to identify any knowledge gaps that remain and potential avenues for future research and cultural heritage management. Finally, the current interpretation, engagement and education strategies employed by SOPA were discussed to understand how they might be built upon in future.

This was subsequently followed up with another meeting and discussion on 8 June 2023. These discussions aimed to further understand strategies to allow for continued and improved Aboriginal cultural engagement within Sydney Olympic Park.

The outcomes of this site inspection are as follows:

- No new Aboriginal objects, or areas with potential for Aboriginal objects (eg PADs) were identified during the inspection.
- Metro LALC acknowledged that the highly disturbed nature of Sydney Olympic Park meant that archaeological finds are unlikely across most of the area. The already existing Aboriginal archaeological zoning plan produced by Paul Irish in 2006 was thought to be accurate to the current conditions of Sydney Olympic Park.
- It was suggested that the isolated artefact finds in the Newington Nature Reserve Forest should be relocated and re-recorded, particularly as it had been 20 years since they were initially identified. We note this could be a difficult (nearly impossible) task, as the artefacts have likely been re-buried or displaced by consequent taphonomic processes. Relocation could allow for an assessment of their current condition, furthering understanding of the finds themselves and providing opportunities for future research, interpretation and management.
- It was agreed that the reclassification of potential scarred trees in the Newington Nature Reserve Forest as non-Aboriginal in origin was likely correct, primarily because the trees are all too young to have been culturally modified.
- Metro LALC noted that the quality of the signage of the Wangal Walk, and the information contained on it, was quite generic. Some factual errors were noted. The opportunity to incorporate the experiences and stories of the Aboriginal communities

of Sydney Olympic Park in interpretive and educational displays, such as the Wangal Walk, was highlighted.

- The display of shields in the Wangal Walk was described as inappropriate and it was observed that the interpretation of the actual shield designs was lacking.
- Metro LALC expressed the opinion that SOPA should ensure that future consultation involves Aboriginal groups and people with specific links to, and cultural knowledge of, Sydney Olympic Park and nearby areas.
- Metro LALC emphasised the opportunity SOPA has, and the importance of, continuing to directly involve Aboriginal people, groups and organisations in the planning, management, and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Sydney Olympic Park.
- It was noted that future research into the evolving relationship between Aboriginal people and Sydney Olympic Park, particularly over the past 20 years would help inform future interpretation, education and engagement programs. It was also suggested that previous research into the intangible connections Aboriginal people hold to the area should be reviewed and brought up to date.

4.2 Aboriginal heritage sites, places and sensitivities

The following archaeological items and PADs are present within Sydney Olympic Park:

- isolated stone artefact finds within the [REDACTED] (AHIMS IDs [REDACTED])
- PADs within the [REDACTED] (AHIMS IDs [REDACTED]); the locations of all three isolated finds are also recorded as PADs; and
- the [REDACTED] is considered as having archaeological sensitivity in general.

The following cultural values and connections between Aboriginal people and Sydney Olympic Park have been noted:

- Homebush Bay holds significant value as a traditional resource gathering location, the site of the earliest interactions between Europeans and Aboriginal people in Sydney Olympic Park, and as a key location demonstrating the continuity of cultural practices post-1788.
- The Newington Estate was an area where Aboriginal people could continue to practice their cultural traditions while forging friendships and collaborating with colonial settlers. Homebush Estate may hold the same values; however, the exact nature of Aboriginal interactions here is unknown.
- Nearby locations such as Parramatta, One Tree Point, Kissing Point, Concord and Duck River also hold significance in the history of Aboriginal people at Sydney

Olympic Park, either as locations where Wangal people continued to live and practice cultural traditions or as the site of early Wangal and colonial interactions.

- Buildings such as the State Abattoirs, Newington Asylum and the Silverwater Correctional Centre represent the changing nature of Aboriginal interactions with SOP through the twentieth century. Aboriginal people from throughout Australia have come to SOP to live and in some cases work in these institutions, although not always by choice.
- Bicentennial Park is significant in the history of Aboriginal rights as the location of the earliest Aboriginal rights protest held during Australia’s bicentenary celebrations.
- The Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games provided numerous opportunities for Aboriginal engagement and promoted Aboriginal culture on a global scale. The Sydney 2000 Games signified the increasing involvement of local Aboriginal people in cultural heritage in Sydney Olympic Park, evidenced by the Wangal Walk and First Murama Ground.

The location of these items and areas with Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity are shown in Figure 4.1.



A scenic view of a city skyline reflected in a body of water. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The city skyline features several tall buildings, including a prominent one with a distinctive golden arch-like structure at the top. The water is calm, reflecting the buildings and the sky. In the foreground, a large number of white birds, possibly swans or geese, are gathered on the water's surface. The overall atmosphere is bright and clear.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study has concluded the following:

- A combination of a lack of historical documentation and archaeological evidence means our understanding of the pre-1788 cultural landscape of Sydney Olympic Park is fragmented and incomplete. This provides a key avenue for future research.
- Post-1788 cultural connections to Sydney Olympic Park have been assessed through the work of Emma Lee and the AHCP. However, no assessment into contemporary Aboriginal connections has been undertaken within the last 20 years. The views and values of Aboriginal people on their more recent history and heritage are important.
- The Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity of Sydney Olympic Park has been assessed by many archaeologists over the past 40 years. These assessments note the history of intense industrial and commercial uses in Sydney Olympic Park have significantly disturbed, if not removed, natural soils with the potential to retain archaeological material across most of Sydney Olympic Park.
- The only exception is in the Newington Nature Reserve Forest, which retain the only known expressions of natural soils within Sydney Olympic Park. The presence of known, and potential, Aboriginal objects/sites within the forest reflects their relatively undisturbed nature.
- The current aims of SOPA to directly involve and work with Aboriginal people, groups and organisations when developing and implementing Aboriginal cultural heritage programs and management of Country should continue to be a key strategic objective.

5.2 Recommendations

- Further research is needed to understand the Aboriginal cultural landscape of Sydney Olympic Park before and after 1788. Focussed investigation into past and contemporary connections may reveal other important aspects of Aboriginal history and experience related to Sydney Olympic Park, noting that Aboriginal community consultation is fundamental to assessment. Consideration should be given to understanding contemporary Aboriginal connections to SOP over the last 20 years given the significant cultural and attitudinal changes within both the Aboriginal community and Australian community more generally.
- The Newington Nature Reserve Forest is archaeologically sensitive for Aboriginal objects. Management practices should reflect this sensitivity. Harm to Aboriginal objects in Sydney Olympic Park, as well as PAD areas, should be avoided. Any

proposed or potential harm or impacts would require statutory approval, through an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP), issued under Section 90 of the NPW Act. This would necessitate the development of an ACHAR prepared by suitably qualified people in consultation with Aboriginal parties.

- There is an opportunity to build on SOPA’s vision for Aboriginal engagement to further the meaningful and ongoing participation of Aboriginal people in the planning, management and presentation of Aboriginal history, heritage and culture with Sydney Olympic Park. An updated Aboriginal community consultation and engagement document plan/policy should be developed to outline how SOPA will implement and manage the involvement of Aboriginal people as part of SOPA’s ongoing activities. Such a document/policy would allow for the development of clear criteria, protocols and procedures regarding how Aboriginal community consultation is managed. This would ensure inclusivity and transparency of the process given there are a range of Aboriginal rights and interests in the SOP.



6 Appendices

6 Appendices

Appendix A

AHIMS Search Results



AHIMS Web Services (AWS)

Extensive search - Site list report

Your Ref/PO Number : 23-0043

Client Service ID : 770670

SiteID	SiteName	Datum	Zone	Easting	Northing	Context	Site Status **	SiteFeatures	SiteTypes	Reports
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]							
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]							
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]							
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]							

**** Site Status**

Valid - The site has been recorded and accepted onto the system as valid

Destroyed - The site has been completely impacted or harmed usually as consequence of permit activity but sometimes also after natural events. There is nothing left of the site on the ground but proponents should proceed with caution.

Partially Destroyed - The site has been only partially impacted or harmed usually as consequence of permit activity but sometimes also after natural events. There might be parts or sections of the original site still present on the ground

Not a site - The site has been originally entered and accepted onto AHIMS as a valid site but after further investigations it was decided it is NOT an aboriginal site. Impact of this type of site does not require permit but Heritage NSW should be notified

Report generated by AHIMS Web Service on 05/04/2023 for Jacob Kiefel for the following area at Lat, Long From : -33.8723, 151.0088 - Lat, Long To : -33.801, 151.1324. Number of Aboriginal sites and Aboriginal objects found is 116

This information is not guaranteed to be free from error omission. Heritage NSW and its employees disclaim liability for any act done or omission made on the information and consequences of such acts or omission.