



MEDIA RELEASE

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Protecting heritage on pipeline route

Upper Hunter Shire Council will be seeking an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) for the Scone to Murrurundi water pipeline project.

The permit will be sought because the draft Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for the project found there is potential for Aboriginal artefacts to be present along the 40 kilometre long corridor.

Mayor Wayne Bedggood said that Council would do what was needed to protect any potential discoveries.

The REF undertaken by NSW Public Works included a Due Diligence Heritage Assessment which identified a number of potential archaeological deposits and Aboriginal sites which are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974).

According to the REF, "...environmental contexts suggest that there is potential for evidence of Aboriginal occupation to have survived previous land use history," and "Artefact scatters and isolated finds are the most likely site type to occur in the proposed route alignments due to the types and locations of landforms (e.g. flats adjacent to water courses)."

Site inspections along the proposed route were conducted as part of the REF and included looking for evidence of Aboriginal objects. All mature trees were inspected and there was no evidence of cultural scarring or carving. Nor was there sandstone or rock outcropping, axe grinding grooves or other cultural marks or cultural sites such as bora grounds, contact sites or burial mounds or stone arrangements identified during the inspections.

Council will seek an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment with an Archaeological Survey Report in consultation with relevant Aboriginal parties under the Office of Environment and Heritage guidelines.

Council's Director of Infrastructure Services Alan Fletcher said Council would undertake all necessary steps to protect Aboriginal sites and that the required processes could extend the timeline for the pipeline's construction.

"The REF describes it as "unlikely" that any unknown Aboriginal objects are uncovered during proposed works, however there are required processes and we will be taking no chances. These findings are likely to extend the project timeline by several months and will have an ongoing impact on the pipeline project," Mr Fletcher said.

"For example, workers' inductions will include their responsibilities under legislation and in the unlikely event Aboriginal objects are found all works must cease and the area is protected until a qualified archaeologist and representatives of registered Aboriginal parties are contacted and can inspect and assess the area to determine its significance."

The draft REF also identified relevant heritage items, particularly the Murrurundi Railway Station area and Mountain House at Wingen however, work on construction of the pipeline will be carried out to avoid impacting on all identified heritage items.

Council is continuing to negotiate with land owners along the proposed route for the \$14 million water pipeline from Scone to Murrurundi, providing a much-needed secure water supply for Murrurundi. The pipeline is still expected to be completed in 2020.

The project is being provided with \$11.5 million in funding under the NSW Government's Restart NSW Water Security for Regions program, \$1.5 million in funding from the NSW Government Country Towns Water Supply and Sewage Program and \$1 million from Upper Hunter Shire Council through borrowed funds.

More information on the Scone to Murrurundi Water Pipeline Project, including the proposed pipeline route, is available on Council's website at <http://upperhunter.nsw.gov.au/our-services/on-your-property/water-services/murrurundi-pipeline-project.aspx>

Wayne Bedggood
MAYOR

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