

Heritage & Wind Farms

Information Sheet

Supplement to the Wind Farm and Heritage Policy (Draft)

Prepared by
the NSW Heritage Office
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What is heritage?

Our heritage includes the places and objects we have inherited from our ancestors, which we value and want to pass on to future generations.

Heritage significance is of aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, natural or aesthetic value of a heritage item for past, present or future generations.

State significance refers to heritage items that are significant to the whole of NSW, and which may be listed on the State Heritage Register.

Local significance refers to heritage items that are significant to a local shire or city, and which may be listed on a Local Environment Plan Schedule.

A Heritage Item refers to a *place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct of heritage significance* listed on the State Heritage Register or in a Local Environment Plan.

It is important to remember that while many heritage items have been identified and listed on the Local Environment Plan or the State Heritage Register, some have not, and penalties can still apply for items destroyed without investigation.

Why is heritage important?

Heritage is important not just because it is old, but because it can tell us about our history and can inform us on how our values have been shaped over time. While heritage can be beautiful to look at, it can also provide a wealth of information about the community that lived there in the past as well as today.

By understanding the decisions that society has made in the past, we are better able to understand the present and make informed decisions for the future.

What is a cultural landscape?

Cultural Landscapes are those areas of the landscape that have been modified by human activity, or have influenced human development. They include rural lands such as farms, villages and mining sites, as well as country towns and landscapes of significance to Aboriginal people.

With over 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation, the precautionary principle suggests that all Australian landscapes are cultural landscapes.

Many cultural landscapes have not yet been formally protected on the State Heritage Register or in Local Environment Plans. The Heritage Office is currently developing a report on the identification and management of

cultural landscapes. Visit www.heritage.nsw.gov.au to find out more.

Why are cultural landscapes important?

Understanding our cultural landscapes paints a picture of our past. Gone is the idea that heritage is merely a *dot on the map*. Today we consider the wider settings in which homesteads and important built structures were built. The idea that the structure overlooked the scenic landscape, or that the landscape provided shelter from the hot sun, can help us understand the interconnectedness of our current cultural values in our landscapes.

The practices which have shaped our values stem from us adapting to the landscape as a society. The concept of landscape has provided a context from which to discuss national identity. In understanding our landscape as different from others, we can depict distinctive elements that contribute to our unique culture. It is our *sunburnt country*, with *lands of sweeping plains* that we wholly identify as being Australian. Not only is it through poetry that the Australian cultural landscapes have been identified, but through paintings, music, history, and conservation movements to name but a few.

How is heritage, protected?

In NSW heritage is protected under the *Heritage Act 1977*. This act aims to “conserve the environmental heritage of the State” (Heritage Act, 1977) by protecting the cultural and natural significance of heritage items, including cultural landscapes, in NSW.

Who the Heritage Council of NSW & the NSW Heritage Office?

The Heritage Council of NSW administers the *Heritage Act*, and is the principal NSW statutory authority on cultural heritage matters. It is also a consent authority and statutory consultee on environmental heritage issues and assessment processes under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and in relation to issues defined in the *Local Government Act 1993*, the *Strata Schemes (Freehold Development) Act 1973* and the *Strata Schemes (Leasehold Development) Act 1986*. The NSW Heritage Office is the government agency supporting the Heritage Council of NSW.

The mission of the NSW Heritage Office and Heritage Council of NSW is *helping people conserve our heritage*.

As the state government body for heritage, it is the role of the Heritage Council to assist stakeholders and the community to determine the identification and management process for heritage items, including cultural landscapes, of state and local significance.

The statutory role of the Heritage Council provides the strength to impose regulations for the management of heritage items including cultural landscapes. Important also is the recognition and promulgation of these important landscapes, and the values attributed to each, within the community.

The Heritage Council and Heritage Office have the role of managing the processes for the identification and management of cultural landscapes, and are responsible for supporting and encouraging the community to value their landscapes.

What is a wind farm?

A wind farm is any land used to generate electricity by wind force. It includes one or more turbines, and any building, or other structures or things used in or in connection with the generation of electricity by wind force.

It does not include turbines principally used to supply electricity for domestic or rural use of the land or anemometers.

What is renewable energy?

SEDA define renewable energy as the production of electricity, transport, fuel or process heat from sources that don't run out - sunshine, wind, flowing water and organic material (bioenergy).

Renewable energy technologies include solar power, solar thermal, wind turbines, hydro

power, wave and tidal power, biomass-derived liquid fuels and biomass-fired generation.

Why is renewable energy important?

The need for renewable energy stems from many sources. Of most concern is the effect of carbon emissions within the atmosphere, and land degradation.

In 2001, the Federal Government introduced its Mandatory Renewable Energy Target. The *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000* requires the generation of 9,500 gigawatt hours of extra renewable electricity per year by 2010, enough power to meet the residential electricity needs of four million people (EPA 2000).

Australia has one of the highest per capita greenhouse gas emission rates for developed countries in the world, contributing 1-2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions (EPA 1997). This results from number of factors, including (EPA 2000):

- the low population density;
- the use of private motor vehicles;
- the reliance on coal for power generation;
- infrastructure development; and,
- land clearing.

NSW has the highest population and the greatest greenhouse gas emissions for any state or territory in Australia (EPA 2000).

“In 1995 NSW and the ACT's combined emissions of greenhouse gases (excluding the effects of land

clearing) totalled 127.1 million tonnes (carbon dioxide equivalent), an increase of 0.2 million tonnes from 1990.” (EPA, 2000).

The NSW Government aims to increase its purchase of renewable energy for State agencies from 5% to 6%. In addition, SEDA has worked with power utilities; who now offer 'green' power to businesses and households to encourage increased development of renewable energy sources (EPA 2000). Between 1999 and 2000, 'green' power consumers nationally almost doubled (SEDA 2000). Surveys on consumers have consistently found a willingness to pay higher premiums for green energy. In 1995, 58% of domestic customers from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane were willing to pay, on average, an additional AUD\$5.20 per week for green energy (Green Power, in EPA 2000).

Who is the Sustainable Development Energy Authority (SEDA)?

SEDA is an agency created by the New South Wales Government to reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions in this state. SEDA accomplishes this by promoting investment in the commercialisation and use of sustainable energy technologies.

Having commenced operation in August 1996, SEDA has already made a significant contribution to the growth of the renewable energy industry. The costs of providing reliable

and sustainable energy services are reducing, jobs in new and vital industries are being created and environmental protection is improving.

How can wind turbines & wind farms impact upon heritage, including cultural landscapes?

The construction of a wind farm will change the landscape in which it sits. If this landscape is of heritage value, it can be said that the wind farm might *Materially Affect* the significance of that heritage landscape.

When the heritage values in a SHR listed landscape could be impacted by a development, the Heritage Office are required to advertise the proposed development, and consider whether the development will jeopardise those values. A similar process operates for LEP listed cultural landscapes with local council.

A wind farm does not automatically have a negative effect on a cultural landscape, but its potential impacts must be considered by consent authorities, and changes in the design of the wind farm to lessen such impacts may be required.

Viewshed: If the values of a heritage landscape lie in the significant views that it offers, a wind farm development can potentially materially affect the views of a place.

A viewshed can be thought of similarly to a watershed, but in terms of what we can see

from a set point. A viewshed is an area composed of land, water, biotic and cultural elements which may be viewed and mapped from one or more viewpoints and which has scenic qualities and/or aesthetic values.

What about wind farms & archaeology?

A relic is any item over 50 years old and as an archaeological resource is irreplaceable. They have enormous potential to contribute to our knowledge of our history, providing information that is unavailable from other sources. It is important that archaeological resources are adequately investigated and recorded if they are to be disturbed.

Wind farms, like any development can affect important archaeological site, both pre- and post- contact.

The principal law which deal with Aboriginal heritage in New South Wales is the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*, while non-Aboriginal archaeology is protected by the *Heritage Act*.

The *NSW Heritage Act 1977* protects the State's natural and cultural heritage and contains measures to protect archaeological resources.

Any excavation of land for wind farming, which might disturb a non-Aboriginal relic, will need an excavation permit from the Heritage Office, while disturbance of Aboriginal relics will require permission from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services.