



Supporting

ABORIGINAL LAND MANAGEMENT



Local Land
Services

Hunter Local Land Services

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter

We help secure the future of agriculture and the environment for NSW communities

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Hunter Local Land Services supports our Aboriginal communities to care for Country, share traditional land management knowledge and protect and strengthen Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land, past, present and future and recognise First Nations peoples have practiced sustainable natural resource management and cared for the flora, fauna and biodiversity of Australia.

Hunter Local Land Services Board and staff are committed to embracing diversity, enhancing respect and providing equitable opportunities for all First Nations peoples across NSW.

We have strong ties with our local Aboriginal communities and work closely to provide support and opportunities for community members to share their traditional knowledge and work with us to create and enhance healthy landscapes and waterways across the Hunter and Manning Great Lakes.

In this document we have brought together information on managing Cultural Heritage and other awareness, education and training projects and programs to support our local Aboriginal communities.

Brett Miners
General Manager
Hunter Local Land Services



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WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The Hunter Local Land Services region has a rich Cultural Heritage and its landscapes and natural resources traditionally sustained a significant Aboriginal population. Aboriginal people have practiced sustainable natural resource management to care for flora, fauna and biodiversity for thousands of years and hold valuable knowledge that can be shared with landholders and the broader community. The region also contains many important cultural sites and landscapes that are of state, national and international significance.

A dedicated Aboriginal Community Advisory Group (ACAG) has been established to advise Hunter Local Land Services on the strategies and priorities our organisation should implement with the Aboriginal community, including training opportunities. The group consists of representatives from a range of Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) and Aboriginal led organisations across the Hunter and Manning Great Lakes.



ACAG and Hunter Local Land Services representatives at a field day



Aboriginal Land Management Team members at a cultural burn



Assessing artifacts as part of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage workshop

LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS IN THE HUNTER LOCAL LAND SERVICES REGION



TIDE team member working on marine debris program

PARTNERING WITH ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS TO REDUCE MARINE DEBRIS

Hunter Local Land Services has partnered with Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE) for several years to undertake the Hunter Regional Marine Debris Program. As part of the program, TIDE has assisted with many marine debris clean-ups across the region, including at culturally significant sites such as Broughton Island and Saltwater National Park. TIDE rangers have become proficient in data collection and in the use of Tangaroa Blue's standard collection methodology and the Australian Marine Debris Initiative (AMDI) app. TIDE rangers continue to assist with the Key Litter Items Survey (KLIS) which is monitoring the effectiveness of the Container Deposit Scheme.

Through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, TIDE is undertaking marine debris clean-ups in priority areas of the Manning estuary to reduce the impact of marine debris on shorebirds and their habitats. TIDE has also been contracted to provide a project officer one day per week for the MidCoast Plastic Pollution Reduction Project, which involves education and source reduction activities, through a partnership between Hunter Local Land Services and MidCoast Council.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Hunter Local Land Services is committed to supporting the region's Aboriginal communities to share and build their skills and capacity in land management. We work to:

- provide leadership and collaboration with local Aboriginal community groups to encourage involvement in our programs;
- facilitate the sharing and building of knowledge and skills amongst local Aboriginal students relating to conservation and ecosystem management and cultural burning;
- build competencies and career pathways for local Aboriginal students, including basic business and planning skills.

We partner with Tocal College to provide training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal Land Management Team (ALMT) members through the Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CEM) course. This partnership is unique in that it delivers a module designed to develop Aboriginal students' knowledge and skills about cultural burning practices.



ALMT members undertaking training



Hunter Local Land Services provides scholarship funding which supports ALMT members to enrol and complete either a Certificate or Diploma in CEM.

The CEM course identifies land management practices for the outcome of healthy Country. As part of the Diploma in CEM for Aboriginal land managers, students learn how to develop:

- Ecological Burn Plans
- Pest Management Plans
- Natural Area Restoration Plans
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Site Assessment Plans
- Business Plans.

Completion of the course has enabled a number of local Aboriginal students to further their career in land management and provided them with vital project management skills. This has proven to be of great benefit to both the students and the organisations they work for.



ALMT members undertaking training



ALMT members undertaking training

'I participated in the Conservation and Land Management course to improve my scientific knowledge in the field, in turn helping me gain a better understanding of my Country. I apply the knowledge on a daily basis in the field, when writing contracts and preparing reports. Completing the course has enabled me to move into a supervisor role and contribute more to the workplace, resulting in a better outcome for our organisation. Working alongside other teachers and students in the same field in such a great environment was a highlight of the course.'

Kentan Proctor

Conservation Land Management and Cultural Heritage Officer
Bahtabah LALC



'Completing the Conservation and Land Management course has provided me with valuable skills and knowledge needed for my position with TIDE. It has provided me with a deeper understanding of the structure of project reporting and the government legislation involved. As Operations Supervisor I am starting to be more actively involved in the administrative side of my workforce and the course provided practical skills in the gathering of information and reporting on a project. It was great to be able to work through the units with others in my team and help each other through the course'

Pedda Cody

Working on Country Operations Supervisor, Chief Remote Pilot for Aerial Services,
Project Officer Plastic Pollution Project
Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE)



SUPPORTING TRADITIONAL LAND MANAGEMENT

Cultural burning is an ancient Indigenous burning practice used to heal the land, returning the Country back to health. It protects vegetation communities by suppressing weeds, encouraging native ground cover and tree regeneration. This in turn improves habitat for native animals and increases biodiversity. Managing Country through cultural burning also results in bushfire hazard mitigation (reducing the fuel load) and supports bushfire risk mitigation for the broader community.

Cultural burning is informed by thousands of years of traditional knowledge. This includes knowing the country and reading the cultural indicators, such as the soil types, geology, trees, ground cover, animals and their breeding times and the flowering times of plants. The timing and frequency of burns will all depend on the cultural indicators.

Unlike hazard reduction burning, cultural burns are cooler and slower moving, usually below canopy height, leaving canopies untouched and allowing animals to take refuge from the flames. Small fires are ignited in controlled conditions using matches, instead of drip torches, and burn over small areas in a circular pattern. The intensity of the fire is controlled, the smoke volume is managed and there is no ember spotting.

Cultural burning is spiritually and culturally important. Learning and sharing cultural burning knowledge is key to ensuring that these practices continue into the future.



Biraban Cultural Burn

Through our unique Cultural Fire Management Program, Hunter Local Land Services is demonstrating the opportunities provided by cultural burning at various scales, locations, vegetation types and land tenures. This program is the first of its kind and is unique as it is tailored to the Hunter vegetation types whilst also restoring knowledge and practices that have been missing from the landscape for over 200 years.

As part of the program, Hunter Local Land Services supports the local Aboriginal community to develop and enhance the skills of local fire practitioners who are trained in how to prepare and implement prescribed and cultural burn plans. Implementation of these plans is demonstrated through cultural burn training workshops which enable the local Aboriginal community to apply and transfer their traditional burning knowledge and land management techniques.



Wedge-tailed Eagle nesting site at Sedgfield

BIRABAN BURN

In 2016, a cultural burn workshop was held at the Biraban LALC landholding near Morisset in the Lower Hunter. The one hectare site was predominantly vegetated and subsequently had the potential to carry wildfire which could spread to the surrounding residential properties. Bushfire history on the site and in the surrounding areas was frequent.

The Biraban cultural burn site contained the following vegetation types:

- Coastal plain woodland, swamp forest and a freshwater wetland
- Habitat for critical flora, including *Acacia bynoeana* (Bynoe's Wattle) and *Angophera inopina* (Charmhaven Apple)
- High priority weeds such as lantana
- Ground cover of tough, less palatable grass species.

Benefits and outcomes from the cultural burn included:

- Increasing the density and diversity of grassland species, including the more palatable kangaroo grass and flax-lily
- Encouraging the regeneration of bush tucker species such as Apple Berry
- Managing weeds such as lantana
- Assisting with the prevention of intense wildfires, protecting surrounding residential properties and habitat trees
- Improving food source and habitat for native animals.



SEDGEFIELD BURN

In 2018, a cultural burn workshop was held at Sedgfield, 5km north of Singleton in the Upper Hunter. The one hectare site was a former Travelling Stock Route which had recently been reclaimed by Wanaruah LALC. It had been cleared of native trees in the past and the vegetation structure was regrowth. The area had not been burnt in many years.

The Sedgfield cultural burn site contained the following vegetation types:

- Endangered Central Hunter Ironbark, Spotted Gum and Grey Box woodland
- Scattered shrubs
- Ground cover of tough, less palatable grass species such as the invasive African Lovegrass.

Benefits and outcomes from the cultural burn included:

- Establishing deeper, healthier soils with reduced runoff and erosion
- Increasing grassland density with long-term control of African Lovegrass
- Improving habitat and food source for native animals
- Protecting habitat trees from intense wildfires
- Providing adequate firebreaks to reduce impacts of wildfires.

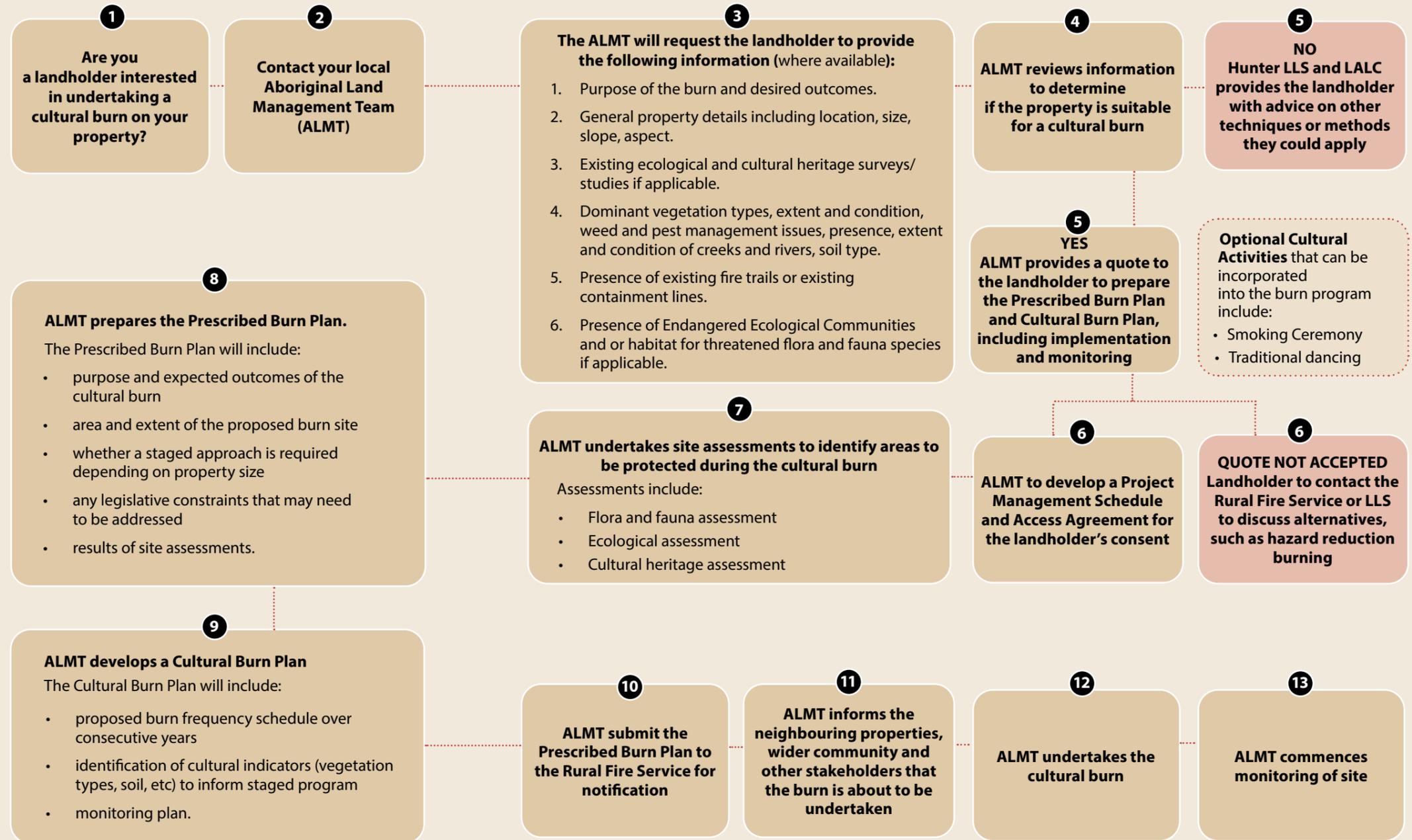


CONNECTING LANDHOLDERS TO TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Applying traditional land management practices can assist landholders to manage weeds, promote native regrowth and improve biodiversity on their property. The steps involved in undertaking a cultural burn on private property are outlined on the flowchart. Most LALCs and other Aboriginal Organisations have Aboriginal Land Management Teams who can provide advice on cultural burns.



Biraban Cultural Burn



Spotted Gum and Ironbark forest



Cultural burn near Singleton



CARING FOR OUR ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is defined as places and objects significant to Aboriginal people related to traditions, stories, observations, lore, customs, beliefs and history. It provides evidence of the lives and existence of Aboriginal people before European settlement through to the present day. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage consists of tangible or intangible elements that link to the past such as grinding grooves, middens, artefact scatters, rock art, ceremonial or burial grounds, scarred and carved trees, stone arrangements, stories and memories.



Hunter Local Land Services supports landholders and Aboriginal communities to protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and follow the Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) provides that a person who exercises due diligence in determining that their actions will not harm Aboriginal objects has a defence against prosecution if they later unknowingly harm an object without an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP). Following the code of practice for the protection of Aboriginal objects assists individuals and organisations to exercise due diligence and sets out steps to:

1. Identify whether or not Aboriginal objects are, or likely to be, present in an area.
2. Determine whether or not their activities are likely to harm Aboriginal objects (if present).
3. Determine whether an AHIP application is required.

If the proposed activity is low impact or within an already disturbed area, the likelihood of the activity harming objects is reduced. Examples of low impact activities and activities that may have disturbed land are included below.

ACTIVITIES THAT MAY HAVE DISTURBED LAND

- Soil ploughing
- Construction of rural infrastructure (eg dams and fences)
- Construction of roads, trails and tracks
- Clearing of vegetation
- Construction of buildings
- Construction of utilities and other similar services of rural infrastructure
- Construction of earthworks

LOW IMPACT ACTIVITIES ON DISTURBED LAND

- Cropping and leaving paddocks fallow
- Construction of water storage works (eg dams and water tanks)
- Construction of fences
- Construction of irrigation infrastructure, groundwater bores or flood mitigation works

LOW IMPACT ACTIVITIES ON ANY LAND

- Maintenance of water storage works, irrigation infrastructure, groundwater bores or flood mitigation works, fences
- Erosion control or soil conservation works
- Vegetation removal if there is minimal disturbance to the surrounding ground surface
- Environmental rehabilitation work including temporary silt fencing, tree planting, bush regeneration and weed removal, grazing

If the proposed works are in an undisturbed area and are NOT low impact activities as listed above, proceed to the Due Diligence Checklist.

Due Diligence Checklist

1 Will the activity disturb the ground surface or culturally modified trees? YES NO

2 Determine if there are known sites or sensitive landscape features. Are there any:

Registered AHIMS* sites YES NO

Aboriginal sites on other registers (see register list)

LALC/other Aboriginal organisation knowledge (see contact list)

OR

Will the works be undertaken on undisturbed land:

within 200m of waters

within a sand dune system

on a ridge top, ridge line or headland

within 200m below or above a cliff face

within 20m of or in a cave, rock shelter, or a cave mouth

3 Can harm to the known site or sensitive landscape feature be avoided? YES NO

If harm cannot be avoided, a desktop assessment and visual assessment is required. Further assessment and an AHIP may be required. Contact EES Heritage Office.

Proceed with caution. If any Aboriginal objects or human remains are found follow the stop work procedures for unexpected finds.

* AHIMS: Aboriginal Heritage Information System

Source: *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales*, (2010) NSW Environment, Energy and Science



WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND AN ABORIGINAL OBJECT OR PLACE

Stop work procedures for unexpected finds

IF YOU FIND AN ABORIGINAL OBJECT:

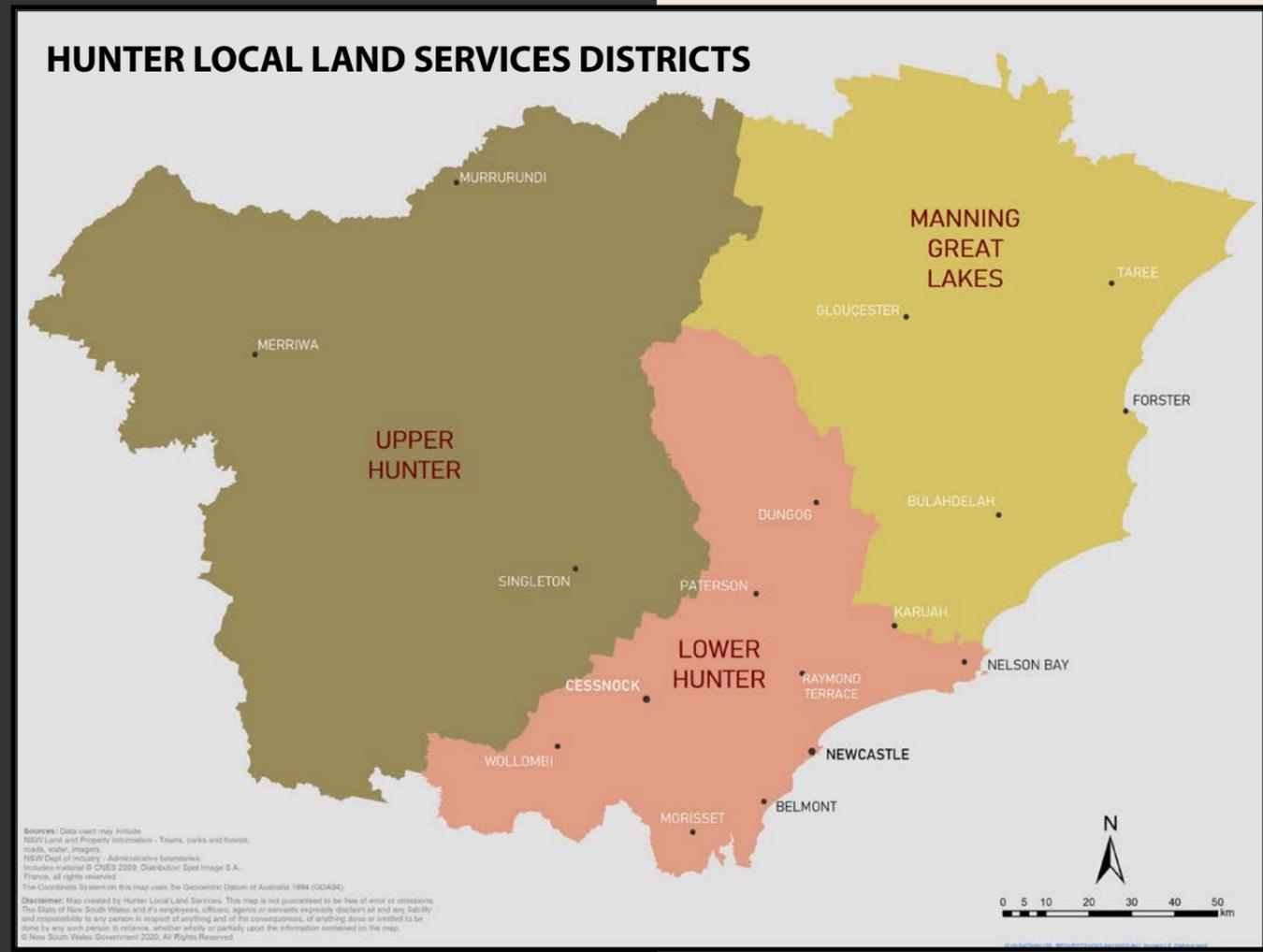
1. Stop work – **IMMEDIATELY**
2. Notify NSW Environment, Energy and Science (EES)
3. EES will assess and advise a course of action based on the significance of the find, which may be:
 - Protect and avoid; or
 - Record and protect; or
 - Investigate, excavate, record and preserve
4. Apply to EES for an AHIP if necessary

IF YOU FIND A SUSPECTED ABORIGINAL BURIAL OR HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS:

1. Stop work **IMMEDIATELY**
2. Contact NSW Police



FINDING OUT MORE



Hunter Local Land ServicesPh: 1300 795 299
 Check out our website for videos of cultural burns
www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter
NSW Aboriginal Land Council.....Ph: 9689 4444



UPPER HUNTER LALCs
 Wanaruah LALC..... Ph: 6543 1288
Other Aboriginal Organisations
 Wonnarua NationPh: 6571 8595

MANNING GREAT LAKES LALCs
 Purfleet/Taree LALCPh: 6552 4106
 Forster LALC Ph: 6555 5411
Other Aboriginal Organisations
 Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE)..... Ph: 6552 3652

LOWER HUNTER LALCs
 Karuah LALC Ph: 4997 5733
 Worimi LALC Ph: 4033 8800
 Mindaribba LALC..... Ph: 4015 7000
 Awabakal LALC Ph: 4965 4532
 Biraban LALC Ph: 4959 1829
 Bahtabah LALC Ph: 4971 4800

Other Aboriginal Organisations
 Awabakal Descendants Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Ph: 0405 149 684
 Awabakal Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Ph: 0412 866 357

NEIGHBOURING LALCs
 Bathurst LALC Ph: 6332 6835
 Birpai LALC..... Ph: 6584 9066
 Darkinjung LALC..... Ph: 4351 2930
 Metropolitan LALC..... Ph: 8394 9666
 Mudgee LALC Ph: 6372 3511
 Nungaroo LALC..... Ph: 6746 2356
 Walhallow LALC Ph: 0428 463 578

PROTECTING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE
 NSW EES Environment LinePh: 131 555
 EES Heritage OfficePh: 9873 8500

LIST OF REGISTERS
EES AHIMS Register
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/awssapp/Login.aspx>
Australian Heritage Database
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/australian-heritage-database>
State Heritage Inventory and Register
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/heritagesearch.aspx>
Local Government Area Local Environmental Plan
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au>



AHIMS Site Recording 4+
 NSW Office of Environment and Heritage



Local Land
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www.ils.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter