

Frequently asked questions

February 2023



Assessments for biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage



An important part of the NSW Wild Dog Fence Extension Project is undertaking the appropriate assessments for biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The assessments required for the project will be carried out along a narrow corridor of the proposed fence alignment (including access tracks) and not on any other parts of landholders' properties. It is important to note that construction will not commence until the required assessments have been completed and approvals received.

Q: What is involved in the assessments for biodiversity (flora and fauna)?

The biodiversity assessment will involve a field assessment to identify the presence of threatened flora and fauna species and potential habitat values of the area. Targeted assessments of threatened species and ecological communities either known to occur, or with the potential to occur in the study area, will be undertaken, and an assessment of the likely impacts associated with the construction and ongoing operation and maintenance of the extended dog fence will be made.

These works will be undertaken by qualified ecological consultants in accordance with relevant State and Commonwealth legislation including the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The biodiversity assessment reports will make recommendations as to the relevant approvals required, proposed mitigations and if biodiversity offsetting is needed.

Q: What is involved in the assessments for Aboriginal cultural heritage?

An assessment of the impacts the extended dog fence may have on Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal places will be undertaken in accordance with relevant State legislation including the *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and in accordance with all relevant guidelines.

A field assessment will be undertaken by qualified archaeologists, Registered Aboriginal Parties and local Traditional Owners. The aim will be to locate, identify and assess the significance of any Aboriginal objects, archaeological deposits and potential archaeological deposits found along the alignment.

The Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment will assist in identifying areas of high Aboriginal significance and in determining appropriate management measures such as alterations to the alignments (where feasible), where harm to such objects can be avoided. Where harm cannot be avoided or mitigated, the appropriate approvals will be sought.

Q: What happens if an ecologist or specialist carrying out an assessment finds an Aboriginal object?

The Aboriginal object will be recorded in the NSW Government database and would come up in a search of the relevant databases in future. Further information about the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) can be found at www.heritage.nsw.gov.au.

Q: Could this impact the landholder and their use of the land?

No, assuming the land is being used legally, Aboriginal objects located on private land do not change the current use of the land. While there is no requirement for landholders to take active steps to protect Aboriginal objects on their property, there are offences under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* for harming Aboriginal objects.

These offences apply regardless of whether the objects are recognised in AHIMS. Further information can be found at www.environment.nsw.gov.au.

Q: Could my property be subject to an Aboriginal land claim?

No, the discovery of an Aboriginal object on your property would not result in your land being subject to a land claim or native title claim or taken from you as the owner under any other circumstances.

Q: Will landholders be informed during the assessment process?

Yes, landholders and other project stakeholders will be provided regular updates regarding the assessments and the project more broadly. Landholders who own property where the proposed fence is to run will be contacted prior to any consultant or project team member accessing their property. Landholders are invited and encouraged to participate in the assessment process.

Q: What planning approval does the project require?

Prior to construction commencing, the project must complete the required assessments for biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage, and have received all the necessary approvals. Within NSW, the project will require planning approval under NSW legislation and will be assessed in accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Other relevant Commonwealth and State legislation will be complied with as required.

