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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose Statement

This document outlines practices to ensure Aboriginal heritage sites within the project area are protected and managed pursuant to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 (AHA)*.

1.2 Scope

This procedure does not cover exploration activities conducted outside of Western Australia.

1.3 Statutory Obligations

The AHA provides protection for all Aboriginal sites whether or not they are recorded on the Register of Aboriginal Sites in the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA). Under section 17 of the Act it is an offence to disturb an Aboriginal site.

A person who:

- Excavates, destroys, damages, conceals or in any way alters any aboriginal site; or

- In any way alters, damages, removes, destroys, conceals or who deals with in a manner not sanctioned by relevant custom, or assume the possession, custody or control of any object on or under an Aboriginal site;

commits an offence unless they are acting with the authorisation of the Registrar of Aboriginal Sites or the consent of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs.

All places reported to the Registrar of Aboriginal Sites are assessed within the terms of section 5 of the AHA. The AHA states that anyone has an obligation to report anything that they believe could be an Aboriginal site.

Therefore, if a possible Aboriginal site is located during ground disturbing activities it should be reported to the Exploration Activities Manager on duty. The Site Supervisor must report the discovery to the Exploration Manager and Heritage and Environment Advisor immediately.

Mining and prospecting activities may have occurred across any of our tenements, over an extended period, resulting in varying degrees of ground disturbance. Ethnographic and archaeological surveys may have been undertaken within the project footprint, and sites may or may not have been identified during these assessments. Additionally, a search of the relevant Aboriginal heritage registers can also indicate whether sites have been previously recorded within the project area. In the event of cultural heritage material and/or human remains being discovered during exploration and construction activities, this CHMP outlines provisions and procedures to be followed that will assist WesCEF in managing such an event.

WesCEF is committed to minimising any impact to heritage sites, where practicable.

1.4 Cultural Heritage Management Plan

WesCEF, its subsidiaries and its contractors will meet all obligations with respect to the CHMP.

WesCEF will ensure that the appropriate permits governing cultural heritage management are secured prior to the disturbance of any cultural heritage site. These permits may include but are not restricted to:

- Permission under section 18 of the AHA from the Minister of Indigenous Affairs to disturb Indigenous cultural heritage sites that will be impacted by the proposed exploration activities.
- Section 16 permit from the Registrar of Aboriginal Sites under the AHA to excavate for archaeological investigation purposes any indigenous archaeological sites with the potential for sub-surface cultural material.

WesCEF will work to ensure that its staff and contractors are aware of their responsibilities under the CHMP to manage cultural heritage sites within and adjacent to the project footprint area. All personnel on site are required to attend a site-specific induction that will include the provisions of this CHMP and specifically their responsibilities regarding the protection and management of cultural heritage. A copy of this CHMP is available to all WesCEF personnel via DCOVA.

1.5 Cultural Learning and Induction Requirements

All personnel must complete the WesCEF General Site Induction, which includes foundational information on Cultural Heritage responsibilities. Personnel must also complete the Site-Specific Induction, which provides tailored guidance on Cultural Heritage practices and obligations relevant to the location. Inductions must be completed prior to commencing any site-based activities.

WesCEF offers a suite of additional Cultural Learning opportunities to support ongoing education, cultural competency, and respectful engagement with Aboriginal communities. Participation in these sessions is strongly encouraged, particularly for personnel involved in land access, project planning, stakeholder engagement, or heritage-sensitive activities.

1.6 Identifying sites during planning

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage sites are identified through a variety of methods and thorough research must be undertaken prior to any ground disturbing activities. This is usually done via the GDP process.

- Previous Heritage Surveys and Reports, including JV partner reports
- Spatial data
- Heritage Register ([Heritage Register](#))
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Inquiry System ([ACHIS](#))

1.7 Aboriginal Site type description

Below is an overview of the various site types that can be found in Western Australia and must be protected.

- Shell middens
- Rock shelters with art
- Rock art, including petroglyphs
- Stone arrangements
- Scarred trees
- Quarries, ochre and stone tools
- Artefact scatters
- Burials

- Artefact Scatters

Artefact scatters are the most common Aboriginal site type in WA, and the most likely to be encountered. They are identifiable through the presence of stone artefacts (often made of BIF or chert), and are usually close to areas where freshwater is available (i.e. riverbanks & claypans).



Stone Tools



Grindstones

Other Site Types

Below are examples of other main site types recorded in WA. All but scarred trees occur on rocky outcrops. Scarred trees may occur on mature trees within the watercourse, or along the banks, of rivers.



Engravings



Quarry



Scarred Trees



Grinding Patches

1.8 Protection of sites

1.8.1 Flagging of Sites

Several heritage sites are known to exist on WesCEF tenements, should sites be located, then they will be demarcated by WesCEF in the form of star pickets topped with white pvc piping, and black and yellow coloured tape. These areas are considered out of bounds and contractors and staff are not to enter them without requisite permissions. Requests to enter these areas should be directed to the Exploration Manager in the first instance. These sites should be included in site specific inductions as well.

Note: Where work is being undertaken on tenements held by other parties, their flagging protocols and access restrictions take precedence. Personnel must adhere to the host tenement holder's requirements regarding site demarcation and permissions.

1.8.2 Access Tracks/Drill Pads/Sumps

WesCEF will utilise both existing tracks and create new access tracks. The routes of tracks and location of drill pads and sumps have been determined with consideration to both environment and heritage.

1.8.3 Inadvertent Discovery

It is possible that cultural heritage sites, cultural heritage material or burial sites may be uncovered during the exploration program. If this occurs, follow the below steps;

1. Cease All Activity

- Immediately stop work in the area of the discovery.
- Alert machinery operators and ground crews to stand down.
- Ensure all equipment is powered down and safely secured.

2. Establish an Exclusion Zone

- Create a minimum 30m exclusion zone
- Use black and red flagging tape, and signage (if available) to mark the area.
- Restrict access to authorized personnel only.

3. Notify On-Site Personnel

- Inform the following key parties immediately:
 - Site Supervisor, who will notify;
 - Exploration Manager
 - Heritage Monitors (only if onsite at time of discovery)
 - Heritage and Environment Advisor, who will notify;
 - Principal Land Access and Tenure
 - JV Partners
 - Traditional Owner stakeholders
 - DPLH, if required

4. If onsite, engage Heritage Monitors

- Invite Heritage monitors to inspect and assess the discovery.
- Respect cultural protocols at all times and seek guidance if unsure (e.g. avoid photographing without approval).

5. Conduct Preliminary Assessment

- Record GPS location
- Take photographs
- Note:
 - Type of site (artefacts, engraving, scar tree, burial, etc.)
 - Visible characteristics
 - Any cultural stories or significance shared by monitors

7. Suspend Works Pending Direction

- Suspend all activities in the exclusion zone until:
 - A formal assessment has been undertaken
 - Clear instructions are received from the LAT Team

8. Record Keeping and Reporting

- Complete an Incident Report (template below).
- Update the Heritage Register (Located [here](#)) and GIS system if required.
- Brief crews on findings and updates as required.

1.8.4 Burials

If human remains are located, the following legislation will apply:

- Coroners Act 1996 – all human remains.
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 – Indigenous burials.
- Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 – Indigenous burials.

In the event of skeletal material being discovered during ground disturbing activity the following procedure will apply:

- a. Ground disturbing activity will cease immediately. The site will be barricaded to prevent further inadvertent access or disturbance.
- b. The Registered Manager will be notified.
- c. The Registered Manager will notify the Southern Cross Police Station Commanding Officer and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (the Registrar).
- d. Police will determine via forensic examination if the remains are human, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal and of recent origin or not.
- e. If the remains are recent a crime scene will be established and the WA Police will take charge of the site. Direction will be provided by the WA Police.
- f. If the remains are not recent and Aboriginal the Department of Aboriginal Affairs will provide guidance on the process to be followed. This is generally as follows:
 - Consult with local Traditional Owners
 - Lodge a Notice under S18 of the AHA
 - After a S18 Notice has been granted the following actions may be considered:
 - ❖ Leave the remains in situ if they have not been disturbed or disturbance has been minimal and future disturbance is unlikely or can be avoided;
 - ❖ Rebury in the same place if the burial has only been partially disturbed and activity at the site can be halted permanently;
 - ❖ Rebury as close as possible to the location at which the remains were found where the risk of future re-disturbance is minimized; and
 - ❖ Rebury in a gazette cemetery or keeping place if disturbance in the area is unavoidable.
 - The Registrar will ensure that the burial place is recorded and placed on the Register of Aboriginal Sites.
 - The Registrar will ensure that the burial place is reported to the Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs, in accordance with the legal requirements under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protection Act 1984.

WesCEF Cultural Heritage Management Plan