

FACT SHEET

Government Departments, Councils, Shires and Sacred Sites



Overview

Urban and industrial development, construction projects and other ground disturbing works can cause significant harm to Aboriginal sacred sites. In the Northern Territory, Government, Councils and Shires have policy to seek advice on the location of sacred sites, and to take steps to avoid harm or unauthorised entry to these sites. Government, Councils and Shires recognise that failure to do so could result in prosecution under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*.

What is a sacred site?

A sacred site might be a tree, a hill, a waterhole, a range of mountains, or any other natural feature of the landscape that is significant according to Aboriginal tradition. It is important to remember that some sacred sites are considered dangerous by Aboriginal people, and are subject to strict access conditions. Other sacred sites might be restricted to men or women only.

All Aboriginal sacred sites in the Territory are protected under the *Sacred Sites Act*. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) is the body established under the Act to be responsible for the protection of sacred sites throughout the Territory.

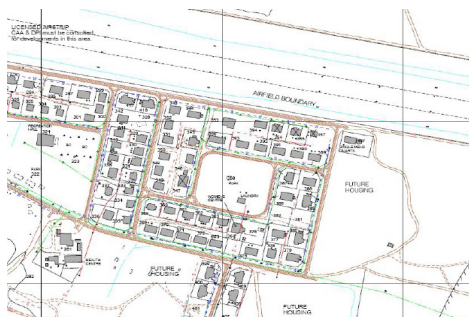
How can we find out where sacred sites are located?

To find out about the location of sacred sites within a given project area, a Register Inspection should be sought from the AAPA. A Register Inspection will be useful in the **planning stage** of a project. For more information on Register Inspections, please contact the AAPA or download a **Register Inspection Fact Sheet** from our website at www.aapant.org.au.

We have a project planned. What should we do?

Prior to undertaking any works in an area, an **Authority Certificate** should be obtained from the AAPA.

An Authority Certificate is a legal document issued under the *Sacred Sites Act*. It sets out the conditions for using or carrying out works on land and sea within the Territory and importantly, **indemnifies the holder against prosecution** under the Act for damage to sacred sites in the area of the Certificate, provided the work or use has been carried out in accordance with the conditions of the Authority Certificate.



When planning projects, it is important to **allow sufficient time** to obtain an Authority Certificate prior to the commencement of works.

For more information on Authority Certificates, please contact the AAPA or download an **Authority Certificate Fact Sheet** from our website at www.aapant.org.au.

We Have an Authority Certificate. What Now?

An Authority Certificate indemnifies the applicant against prosecution only if the proposed works and use of the land or sea are carried out in accordance with the conditions on the Authority Certificate. Therefore, it is important to:

- Ensure that you are only carrying out works or use of land/sea as defined on the Authority Certificate.
- Understand the conditions on the Authority Certificate.
- Observe any restricted work areas marked on the map that forms part of the Authority Certificate. Be aware that it is **your legal responsibility** to ensure that all contractors, sub-contractors and employees comply with the conditions on the Authority Certificate.
- Understand that the works must commence within the timeframe stipulated on the Authority Certificate.

If you have any questions about the conditions on the Authority Certificate at any stage of your project, **contact the AAPA immediately**. An AAPA staff member will be available to discuss the conditions on the Authority Certificate in-situ if required. Remember, it is much better to contact the AAPA if you or your contractors are not sure than to risk damage to a sacred site.

