

OFFICIAL

# Cultural Heritage Contingency Plan

When Working on or Occupying VicTrack Land

## Document information

Document ID	PR-GL 006
VicTrack ref	D/23/12174
Version	2.1
Approved date	3 July 2023
Next review date	4 July 2025
Security	OFFICIAL

## Contents

<b>Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Purpose .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Context .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Principals, legislation &amp; best practice .....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1. VicTrack principles of cultural heritage management .....	4
3.2. Key legislation and regulations .....	4
<b>4. Key stakeholders &amp; responsibilities .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Contingency plans .....</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1. Unexpected discovery of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.....	5
5.2. Discovery of human remains .....	7
5.3. Unexpected discovery of Historic Heritage .....	8
<b>6. Definitions .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7. Legislative and regulatory framework .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8. Reference documents.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>9. Document review and approval.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10. Document history.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>11. Review period.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Attachment 1 – Preliminary Report Form .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Attachment 2 – Aboriginal cultural heritage factsheets.....</b>	<b>11</b>

## Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

VicTrack acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on a disciplined social and cultural order that has sustained 60,000 years of existence.

### 1. Purpose

This Cultural Heritage Contingency Plan (CHCP) is a contingency strategy to manage cultural heritage found unexpectedly during the course of an activity, where there are no requirements to seek approvals for that activity under the Heritage Act 2017, Planning and Environment Act 1987 or Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 prior to works commencing. The activity might include maintenance works, require soil disturbance, or generally have the potential to impact on the cultural heritage.

This CHCP has been prepared for use by VicTrack employees, contractors, third parties who occupy VicTrack land (including transport, tenants and licence holders) and anyone conducting activities on VicTrack owned land that may potentially contain cultural heritage values.

### 2. Context

The CHCP provides a structured framework in which the requirements for recording and salvaging of encountered Aboriginal or historical places or objects will be assessed, and action taken, within the course of works.

For the purposes of the CHCP, the term 'cultural heritage' is used to cover all Aboriginal and historic heritage places, material and objects.

In particular, this CHCP provides contingency plans for the following:

- Discovery of Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Discovery of human remains
- Discovery of historic heritage

If site specific cultural heritage investigations and formal heritage approvals are required and have been completed, then the contingency plans in those approval documents supersede this CHCP.

**This CHCP is not intended to override or replace any statutory obligations or requirements which exist in relation to the identification and/or management of heritage objects and places. VicTrack expects full compliance with the relevant statutory and regulatory regime in relation to any activities at the Site that may impact upon heritage objects and places.**

### 3. Principals, legislation & best practice

#### 3.1. VicTrack principles of cultural heritage management

VicTrack is committed to the effective management of its land and supports government legislation, regulation and principles on the management of its cultural heritage.

VicTrack’s key principles in managing heritage places and objects are to:

- Ensure their protection
- Put in place processes for identification and management
- Adopt best industry practice
- Consult with all relevant parties and stakeholders when managing cultural heritage places and objects

#### 3.2. Key legislation and regulations

There are several regulatory mechanisms by which cultural heritage is identified, protected and managed within Victoria. The applicable legislation and regulations have been considered in the development of this CHCP and are listed in Section 7.

It is the responsibility of parties using this CHCP to understand their obligations in regards to all relevant legislation and regulations.

This document does not cover Native Title or Indigenous Land Use Agreement issues in relation to a proposed activity.

### 4. Key stakeholders & responsibilities

The table below outlines the key stakeholders and their responsibilities to ensure the successful implementation of the CHCP.

Stakeholder	Responsibility
<b>Site Owner - VicTrack</b>	Overarching responsibility for the provision of the CHCP. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of this CHCP to employees, site tenants / licensees/ occupiers and contractors conducting earthworks or activities that may impact upon cultural heritage values at a site.</li> <li>• Conducting compliance auditing of implementation of the CHCP from time to time.</li> <li>• Review, revision and updating of this document.</li> <li>• Engage with stakeholders as required.</li> </ul>
<b>Site Occupants (Lessees, licensee, Rail Operators)</b>	Responsibility for the implementation of this CHCP, ensuring appropriate actions are taken should cultural heritage be uncovered and compliance with relevant legislation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of this CHCP to contractors / site personnel who are likely to undertake an activity that may encounter cultural heritage, such as during soil disturbance works.</li> <li>• Ensuring any contractors and visitors involved in activities with potential to encounter cultural heritage are inducted and comply with the requirements of this CHCP.</li> <li>• Conducting compliance auditing of implementation of the CHCP on relevant contractors / site personnel completing soil disturbance activities from time to time.</li> <li>• Ensuring compliance with all applicable legislation and guidelines relevant to management of cultural heritage, including undertaking all required assessments, management plans, communications with registered Aboriginal parties and seeking approvals.</li> <li>• Reporting any incidents, complaints, non-conformances and corrective actions taken to VicTrack.</li> <li>• Provision of all relevant documentation to VicTrack.</li> <li>• Contact relevant authorities if cultural heritage is suspected</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Responsibility
<b>Construction / Maintenance Workers</b> <b>On-site Contractors</b>	<p>Perform any activities / soil disturbance works in the manner specified in this CHCP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complying with all applicable legislation and guidelines relevant to management of cultural heritage.</li> <li>• Ensuring that all employees, sub-contractors it engages and any other personnel accessing the site whilst under its control / during a project comply with the requirements of this CHCP.</li> <li>• Ensure the contingency plans for discovering Aboriginal or Historical Cultural Heritage Material are adhered to.</li> <li>• Stop works on discovery of suspected cultural heritage</li> <li>• Contact relevant authorities outlined in this CHCP (including the site owner and site occupant/s) if unexpected discovery of cultural heritage occurs</li> <li>• Reporting any incidents, complaints non-conformances and corrective actions taken to the Site Tenant / Occupier / VicTrack.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant authority</b>	<p>The appropriate authority to contact as outlined in the CHCP for discovery of cultural heritage or human remains that may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victoria Police</li> <li>• State Coroner's Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet</li> <li>• Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and other Traditional Owners (TOs)</li> <li>• First People – State Relations (FP-SR), Department of Premier and Cabinet</li> <li>• Heritage Victoria</li> </ul> <p>Provide instructions on how to undertake an activity in order to comply with legislation.</p>
<b>Heritage Advisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and assessment of cultural heritage to determine significance</li> <li>• Provide advice on how to comply with legislation</li> <li>• Develop cultural heritage management plans where required</li> <li>• Register artifacts</li> </ul>

## 5. Contingency plans

A summary of the minimum contingency actions required, where unexpected discovery of cultural heritage is identified, are detailed below.

Refer to the following sections, depending on the material identified, for the contingency actions:

- Suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage, Section 5.1
- Suspected human remains, Section 5.2
- Historic heritage, Section 5.3

### 5.1. Unexpected discovery of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal cultural heritage may include artefacts, shell middens, hearths (fireplace or firepit), earthen mounds, or scarred trees. Please see Appendix 2 for factsheet examples with images of what Aboriginal cultural heritage may look like and, further details of some Aboriginal cultural heritage that may be encountered on VicTrack land.

If Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or suspected during an activity, the following minimum measures are required regardless of the impact of the activity being undertaken, including if the activity is low impact (such as a site inspection, weeding or a maintenance activity).

If any suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage is located during an activity, the following steps must be followed:

- Do not remove the object.
- **All works must stop in that area immediately**

- Immediately, or as soon as reasonably practical, report the suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage to the person in charge of the activity
- Within one business day, set up a buffer of up to 10 meters around the location to fence off the discovery. This may be in the form of star pickets and webbing, cyclone fencing, bollards and webbing, or similar protection. If there are no obstructions to fencing/protection, the maximum buffer must be actioned. If however safety protocols, operational rail infrastructure or a works corridor preclude the maximum buffer from being fenced (for example if the find is located adjacent to a rail track), the maximum possible buffer is to be observed (e.g. to the maximum extent you are able to achieve a buffer). It is noted that no works may proceed in this area until advised to do so by a RAP representative and/or a Heritage Advisor (see below for more details).
- Works may continue outside the fenced off area (outside the area of the discovery).

One of the following two options must then be undertaken within one business day:

**Option 1 – Engage a Heritage Advisor to notify of the discovery and assess**

A Heritage Advisor can assist with the process of identification and notification, via following the steps below:

1. A photograph may be taken of the object and sent to a Heritage Advisor, to confirm if it is Aboriginal cultural heritage. It is important to include a scale, such as a coin or tape measure in the photograph.
2. The buffer and fencing must be maintained until the Heritage Advisor has confirmed if the object is or is not an item of Aboriginal cultural heritage. If the object is Aboriginal cultural heritage, the Heritage Advisor will liaise with the RAP and will follow the contingencies listed in Part 2, communicating directly with VicTrack or the person in charge of the activity.
3. The Heritage Advisor must attend the area within two business days of notification of the suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage and, in consultation with any appointed RAP:
  - Fully assess and if required, record the Aboriginal cultural heritage
  - Advise on legislative requirements in relation to appropriate management measures for the Aboriginal cultural heritage, to VicTrack and/or the person in charge of the activity. This may include preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP).
4. Fees are payable to the Heritage Advisor and RAP.

**Option 2 – Self-report the discovery and await response**

You can self-report suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage, via the following steps:

1. Notify First Peoples - State Relations (FP-SR) of a discovery by completing a Preliminary Report form: Report a possible Aboriginal heritage place (<https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report-a-possible-Aboriginal-heritage-place.docx> or also in Appendix 1)
2. The completed form can be sent back to First Peoples State Relations via the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Registry team: [vahr@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:vahr@dpc.vic.gov.au)
3. Works cannot proceed within the fenced area until a determination has been made by FP-SR. There are no statutory timeframes within which First Peoples – State Relations must respond, so the timeframe that works can recommence in the fenced off area cannot be pre-determined.

**5.1.1. Aboriginal Heritage confirmed**

It is the person in charge of an activity's responsibility to adhere to all legislative requirements relevant to any Aboriginal cultural heritage that may be present within the Activity Area.

If it has been confirmed that an Aboriginal cultural heritage object has been identified on site, the person undertaking the activity must consider whether it is possible to avoid harm to the Aboriginal cultural heritage, and if harm cannot be avoided, whether harm can be minimised. If harm cannot be avoided or minimised, the person in charge of the activity must arrange a meeting between a Heritage Advisor and relevant Traditional Owner groups or RAPs (should they wish to attend) as soon as practicable, to discuss and agree an appropriate way of

managing the Aboriginal cultural heritage under a statutory approval. This may include a cultural heritage permit or cultural heritage management plan (CHMP).

The temporary fencing around the suspected or identified Aboriginal cultural heritage may be removed, and works re-commence in the fenced area when the suspected or identified Aboriginal cultural heritage has been investigated and managed appropriately, in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and as agreed in discussions with either the RAP or the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Heritage Advisor must record the Aboriginal cultural heritage in accordance with Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) standards and relevant forms must be submitted to the VAHR as soon as practical.

## 5.2. Discovery of human remains

If suspected human remains are found the following steps followed:

1. **Stop work in the area immediately**
2. The remains must be left in place and protected from harm or damage. Works within 30 meters of the suspected human remains must cease and a barricade erected. This may be in the form of star pickets and webbing, cyclone fencing, bollards and webbing, or similar protection. If there are no obstructions to fencing/protection, the maximum buffer must be actioned. If however safety protocols, operational rail infrastructure or a works corridor preclude the maximum buffer from being fenced (for example if the find is located adjacent to a rail track), the maximum possible buffer is to be observed (e.g. to the maximum extent you are able to achieve a buffer).
3. Inform the person in charge of the activity and VicTrack as soon as possible.
4. Inform Victoria Police on 131 444 and the State Coroner's Office on 1300 309 519 immediately. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that the remains are Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, the Coronial Admissions and Enquiries hotline must be contacted on 1300 309 519. All details of the location and nature of the human remains must be provided to the relevant authorities.
5. Do not contact the media; do not take any photographs of the remains other than those requested by the relevant authorities.

### 5.2.1. Aboriginal Ancestral Remains confirmed

If the human remains are determined to be Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, the person responsible for the activity must report the existence of them to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council in accordance with section 17 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

The Victorian Heritage Council, after taking reasonable steps to consult with any Aboriginal person or body with an interest in Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, will determine the appropriate course of action as required by section 18(2)(b) of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

An appropriate impact mitigation or salvage strategy as determined by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council must be implemented by the person in charge of the activity or VicTrack.

The treatment of salvaged Aboriginal Ancestral Remains must be in accordance with the direction of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.

Any reburial site(s) must be fully documented by an experience and qualified archaeologist, clearly marked and all details provided to the Registrar.

Appropriate management measures must be implemented to ensure the Aboriginal Ancestral Remains are not disturbed in the future.

### 5.3. Unexpected discovery of Historic Heritage

Buried evidence such as an artefact, deposit or feature that is 75 years old or more is protected under the *Heritage Act 2017*, and may constitute an archaeological site.

Examples of historic heritage may include, but are not limited to: building foundations or post holes, historic artefact scatters (ceramics, glass, bottles, bricks, metal, bone, clothing), evidence of gold mining, evidence of former commercial or residential sites, industries. See website for further information:

<https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/heritage-listings/historical-archaeology>.

Under Regulation 127(2) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, if an archaeological site is discovered in the course of any construction or excavation on any land, the person in charge of the construction or excavation (the supervisor) must as soon as practicable report the discovery to the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria on 03 9938 6894.

It is recommended the determining first if the item or feature is of appropriate age, by first photographing the object or feature and send it to a Heritage Advisor. It is important to include a scale, such as a coin or tape measure in the photograph.

#### 5.3.1. Historic Heritage Confirmed

If it is determined to be an artefact, deposit or feature that is 75 years old or more, then works must stop in the vicinity, until appropriate approvals are in place. The person in charge of the construction or excavation may be required to obtain the appropriate Consent from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the site can be subject to further damage or disturbance.

## 6. Definitions

Definitions commonly used throughout this document are provided in the following table:

Term	Definition
<b>AV</b>	Aboriginal Victoria
<b>CHCP</b>	Cultural Heritage Contingency Plan
<b>CHMP</b>	Cultural Heritage Management Plan A document that sets out ways to protect and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage. The CHMP must be approved by the relevant RAP, where one exists.
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	Term used in this document to cover all Aboriginal and historic heritage places, material and objects.
<b>Heritage advisor</b>	An appropriately qualified person [listed under the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act (2006)] who has been trained in the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage or who has extensive experience or knowledge in relation to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage.
<b>Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)</b>	A recognised Aboriginal person/people under the Aboriginal Heritage Act, 2006.
<b>Sponsor</b>	In relation to a cultural heritage management plan, means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a CHMP is required under the Act in relation to an “activity”, the person who is seeking to undertake the activity; and</li> <li>• In any other case, the person seeking the preparation of the plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional owner</b>	An Aboriginal person/people recognised as having a traditional connection to country.
<b>VAHR</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register



## 7. Legislative and regulatory framework

Acts of legislation, standards or regulations to which this document relates:

- Planning and Environment Act, 1987
- Heritage Act, 2017
- Aboriginal Heritage Act, 2006
- Aboriginal Heritage Regulations, 2018
- Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999

## 8. Reference documents

This procedure should be read and applied in conjunction with the following VicTrack documents:

- None

## 9. Document review and approval

Delegation	Name	Position	Version	Date
<b>Owner</b>	Narelle Simmons	Group Manager, Environment	2.1	21 April 2023
<b>Reviewer</b>	Narelle Simmons	Group Manager, Environment	2.1	21 April 2023
<b>Approver</b>	Andrew Santana	Group Manager, Environment	2.1	3 July 2023

## 10. Document history

Version	Amendment description	Author	Date
<b>Version 0.1</b>	Creation of document	Madelyn Smith	19 Aug 2014
<b>Version 0.2</b>	Minor revision of document to reflect organisational responsibilities, updating of formatting, application of document control and authorisation.	Madelyn Smith	Feb 2016
<b>Version 1.0</b>	Review and approval	Madelyn Smith	22 Feb 2016
<b>Version 2.0</b>	Review and update with most up to date information and legislation available, addition of flow chart	Eunjee Vella	6 May 2020
<b>Version 2.1</b>	Attachments included, simplified instructions	Madelyn Nunn	11 April 2023

## 11. Review period

This procedure will be reviewed at least every two (2) years by the Document Owner, or amended as appropriate.

The content of this document is uncontrolled when printed. The current version of this document is available on The Loop.

Attachment 1 – Preliminary Report Form

# Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

ABORIGINAL VICTORIA

## Preliminary Report Form

*This form is intended for use by anyone who wishes to **report a possible Aboriginal heritage place**. Aboriginal Victoria (AV) will endeavour to organise inspection of the place at the earliest possible time. The inspection will be carried out by staff of AV.*

**1. Date of report**        /        / 20 .....

**2. Person making this report**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (h) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Materials supplied with this report**

Please list any photographs or other items supplied with this report, noting any that should be returned to you

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Will the person making this report be able to participate in the inspection?**

Yes  / No

If Yes, please indicate preferred times:

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Site description (Tick more than one category if appropriate)**

Any additional information

Stone artefacts

Rock art

Shells

Scarred trees

Animal bones

Earthworks

Burnt clay/stones

Stone structures

Human remains

Buildings - ruined/intact

Other (specify)

Additional Information:

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE NOTE** that artefacts and other material should not be removed from places for reporting purposes.

**6. Site location, ownership and access**

Nearest town or named feature

---

1:100,000 scale mapsheet (if known)

---

Grid reference (if known) Easting \_\_\_\_\_ Northing \_\_\_\_\_

Land ownership - Crown  / Private

Private owner's name / address \_\_\_\_\_

Directions for relocation (please attach a sketch map if possible)

---

---

Site access

Permission required     Liable to flooding     4 WD required     Guide required

Additional information

---

---

**7. Site condition**

Is the site currently under threat of disturbance?

Yes  / No

If Yes, please give details

---

*Please send completed forms to:*

**Heritage Registrar  
Aboriginal Victoria  
GPO Box 4912  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001**

**Enquiries: 1800 762 003**

**EMAIL: [vahr@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:vahr@dpc.vic.gov.au)**

## Attachment 2 – Aboriginal cultural heritage factsheets

# ABORIGINAL GRINDING STONES



Large grinding stone damaged by agricultural equipment

## What are Aboriginal Grinding Stones?

Grinding stones are slabs of stone that Aboriginal people used to grind and crush different materials. Bulbs, berries, seeds, insects and many other things were ground between a large lower stone and a smaller upper stone.

## Where are They Found?

Grinding stones are usually found where Aboriginal people lived and camped. For example, they have been found in shell middens and rock shelters, and at open camp sites and rock art sites. They are common in museum and private collections.

## How Did Aboriginal People Use Grinding Stones?

Grinding stones were among the largest stone implements of Aboriginal people. They were used to crush, grind or pound different materials.

A main function of grinding stones was to process many types of food for cooking. Bracken fern roots, bulbs, tubers and berries, as well as insects, small mammals and reptiles, were crushed and pulped on grinding stones before cooking. Some types of food are poisonous in their natural state, and could only be eaten after being crushed and washed.

Place Identification  
Mini Poster 9

## Characteristics

- Grinding stones are usually made from abrasive rocks such as sandstone or coarse-grained basalt or quartzite.
- The stones are sometimes found upside down, with the grinding surface facing the ground to preserve it from the weather. Upper and lower grinding stones will not necessarily be found together.
- Smooth river pebbles sometimes resemble grinding stones. If you look closely, the surface of a river pebble has tiny impact marks caused by collisions with other pebbles in the river. The surface of a grinding stone has many scratches caused by abrasion but feels smooth.

## Lower Stones

- Stones range in size, from very small (150 millimetres across) to very large (700 millimetres across). They can weigh several kilograms.

continued 2nd side



Milling seeds on large flat grinding stones was common in the drier areas of Australia, but less common in Victoria. Leaves and bark were crushed on grinding stones to make medicines.

Aboriginal people also used small grinding stones to crush soft rocks and clays (such as ochre) to make pigments. The pigments were used to decorate bodies for ceremonies, to paint rock art, and to decorate objects such as possum skin cloaks and weapons.

Rocky outcrops are rare in some regions, so the Aboriginal people imported slabs of suitable stone. But large grinding stones were rarely moved. Aboriginal people carried as little as possible when they moved camp, and they often left heavy items such as grinding stones as permanent camp 'furniture' to be used on the next visit.

### **Why are Aboriginal Grinding Stones Important?**

Grinding stones were developed in south east Australia during the last Ice Age, about 15,000 years ago. Conditions were much drier then, and grinding stones allowed people to live in areas where food was limited.

Grinding stones help us learn about the size of past Aboriginal populations in different regions, their foods, and their reactions to great changes in climate. The origin of some stones is known, which helps us trace the movements of people and their social connections with other regions.

Grinding stones are an important link for Aboriginal people today with their culture and their past.

### **Are Aboriginal Grinding Stones under Threat?**

Natural processes such as wind and water erosion may disturb grinding stones, but human interference poses the greatest threat. Ploughing, development and any earthworks may disturb Aboriginal places. Ploughing in particular can break or cut stones.

Grinding stones are unmistakable Aboriginal artefacts, and many have

been collected as souvenirs. Flat stones have even been used for dry stone walls, paths and house foundations. Once the stones are moved, important information about them is lost.

Aboriginal Victoria records the location, dimensions and condition of Aboriginal grinding stones. The aim is to have a permanent written and photographic record of this important part of the heritage of all Australians.

### **Are Aboriginal Grinding Stones Protected?**

The law protects all Aboriginal cultural places and artefacts in Victoria. It is illegal to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Grinding stones and other artefacts should not be removed from site.

It is also illegal to sell Aboriginal artefacts without a permit. Information about cultural heritage permits may be obtained from Aboriginal Victoria.

### **What If You Find an Aboriginal Grinding Stone?**

Do not disturb it or remove it from the site. Check whether the stone has the typical characteristics of an Aboriginal grinding stone. If it does, record its location and write a brief description of its condition. Note whether it is under threat of disturbance.

Please help to preserve Aboriginal cultural places by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Victoria.

Contact:

Heritage Services

Aboriginal Victoria

Department of Premier & Cabinet

1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC, 3002

Telephone: 1800 762 003

[Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au)

### **Characteristics cont.**

- They can be any shape: oval, round, rectangular or irregular.
- Grinding stones made from sandstone or quartzite are usually flat. Basalt stones can be more rounded.
- Grinding stones have a worn depression, varying in shape from a circle to a long thin groove.
- The depth of the grinding area will vary, and a hole may have formed where the stone is completely worn away.
- There may be traces of food or pigments on the stone. Fats may leave glossy stains.
- Depressions or grooves may occur on different sides of the same stone.
- Some grinding surfaces have carved lines.

### **Upper Stones**

- The smaller upper stones (or pestles) can be flat or rounded. They may have more than one smooth surface.
- They are usually small enough to hold in one hand.
- They may be damaged on the working edge if they were used as a pounder.

June 2008

Copyright State Government of Victoria 2008.  
Authorised by the Victoria Government, Melbourne  
ISBN 978-1-921331-60-2

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage.html>

**ABORIGINAL VICTORIA**

# ABORIGINAL FLAKED STONE TOOLS



A group of artefacts of different size, shape and material

## What are Aboriginal Flaked Stone Tools?

Flaked stone tools were made by hitting a piece of stone, called a core, with a 'hammerstone', often a pebble. This would remove a sharp fragment of stone called a flake.

Both cores and flakes could be used as stone tools. New flakes were very sharp, but quickly became blunt during use and had to be sharpened again by further flaking, a process called 'retouch'. A tool that was retouched has a row of small flake scars along one or more edges. Retouch was also used to shape a tool.

Not all types of stone could be used for making tools. The best types of stone are rich in silica, hard and brittle. These include quartzite, chert, flint, silcrete and quartz. Aboriginal people quarried such stone from

outcrops of bedrock, or collected it as pebbles from stream beds and beaches. Many flaked stone artefacts found on Aboriginal places are made from stone types that do not occur naturally in the area. This means they must have been carried long distances.

## Where are Stone Tools Found?

Stone tools are the most common evidence of past Aboriginal activities in Australia. They occur in many places and are often found with other remains from Aboriginal occupation, such as shell middens and cooking hearths. They are most common near rivers and creeks. It is easier to find them where there is not much vegetation or where the ground surface has been disturbed, for example by erosion.

Place Identification  
Mini Poster 4

## Characteristics

### General

- Sharp edges.
- Retouch along one or more edges.
- Stone rich in silica.
- Stone type often different to the natural rock in the area.

### Flakes

- Usually less than 50 mm long.
- A 'striking platform' (see diagram) visible.
- Impact point often present on the striking platform.
- A 'bulb of percussion' often present below the striking platform.
- May have been shaped into a recognisable tool form, such as a point or scraper.

### Cores

- May be fist-sized or smaller.
- May have one or more scars where flakes have been removed.

Not all of these features can be seen on each stone tool and some require an experienced eye to identify them. Breakage can remove some key features.

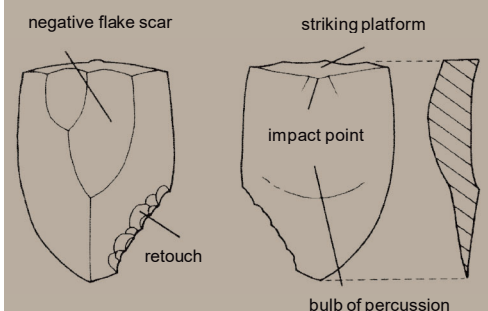
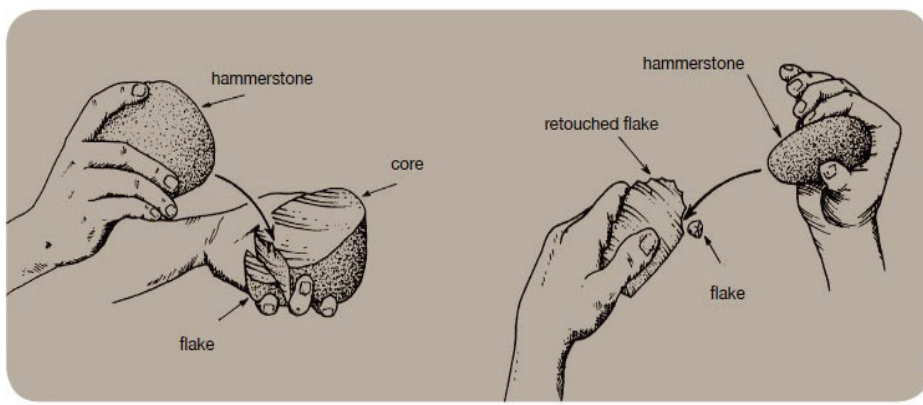


Diagram showing basic flake characteristics





How flaked stone tools were made

## What to Do if You Find a Flaked Stone Tool

Do not remove any material from the area. If you pick up a stone to examine it, make sure that you put it back where it came from. Check whether it has some of the key characteristics. Record the location, noting roughly how many stones there are. Note whether the area is under threat of disturbance.

## What Were Flaked Stone Tools Used For?

Flaked stone tools could be made quickly, and were used for many everyday tasks, including shaping objects made of wood, bark and bone. They were used as spear-tips in hunting weapons and as knives to butcher game. They were also used to scrape and prepare animal skins for making cloaks, containers and decorative items.

## How Else can Stone be Flaked?

Many natural processes can break stone. These include rockfall and extreme changes in temperature. Modern machines, such as ploughs, can also fracture stone. It is important to be able to distinguish stone that has been naturally or accidentally fractured from stone that was deliberately flaked by Aboriginal people. Some of the characteristics of Aboriginal flaked stone artefacts may occasionally occur on naturally fractured stone. However, it is very rare for two or more of these characteristics to occur on the same piece of stone as the result of a natural process.

## Why are Flaked Stone Tools Important?

Because stone artefacts do not rot or rust, they are often the only evidence of Aboriginal occupation in a particular area. Stone artefacts can provide information about where Aboriginal people lived, how they made other tools, hunted and prepared food. Sometimes traces of wood, plant food, or animal blood can survive on the edges of flaked stone tools. Specific marks and damage on a tool from use can help tell us what it was used for. This is because different tasks, such as wood carving or scraping animal skins, damaged the edge in different ways.

By finding the original source of stone that was used to make tools, it is sometimes possible to trace the movement of stone within an area. This tells us about Aboriginal systems of trade, exchange and social alliances.

There were a number of changes to the stone tools used by Aboriginal people over time. Because of this, stone tools can help provide an approximate age for the Aboriginal occupation of an area. Flaked stone tools are one of a range of artefacts that provide Aboriginal people today with an important link to their culture and past.

## Threats to Aboriginal Stone Tools

Because stone artefacts are found in many different places, and are usually small, they can be difficult to protect. They are sometimes collected by people who do not understand the importance of leaving Aboriginal cultural materials where they are found. Erosion and weathering and activities such as

ditch digging and ploughing can disturb flaked stone artefacts. They can also be broken when trampled by animals such as cows, or when run over by vehicles.

Aboriginal Victoria records flaked stone artefacts so that we will have a permanent photographic and written record of this important part of the heritage of all Australians. Some particularly good examples of places containing flaked stone artefacts may require active conservation so that they can be preserved for future generations.

## Are Flaked Stone Artefacts Protected?

All Aboriginal cultural places in Victoria are protected by law. Aboriginal artefacts are also protected.

It is against the law to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Artefacts should not be removed from site.

Please help to preserve Aboriginal cultural places by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Victoria.

Contact:

Heritage Services  
Aboriginal Victoria  
Department of Premier & Cabinet  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC, 3002  
Telephone: 1800 762 003  
[Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au)

June 2008

Copyright State Government of Victoria 2008.  
Authorised by the Victoria Government, Melbourne  
ISBN 978-1-921331-55-8

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage.html>

**ABORIGINAL VICTORIA**

# ABORIGINAL GROUND-EDGE AXES



Greenstone Axe blank (left) and Ground-edge Axe (right)

## What are Aboriginal Ground-edge Axes?

Ground-edge axes are stone chopping tools with cutting edges that were formed by grinding. They were often designed to have a handle.

Aboriginal ground-edge axes are usually rounded or oval in shape, but may be slightly elongated with a straighter, sharpened end.

## Where are They Found?

Ground-edge axes can be found almost anywhere where Aboriginal people camped or lived in Victoria. They may be found near axe-grinding grooves, axe quarries or burial sites.

## How Did Aboriginal People Make Ground-edge Axes?

Aboriginal people made 'axe blanks' by striking large flakes of stone from rocky outcrops (see Mini Poster 7), then roughly shaping them. They carried axe blanks across great distances for trading.

The axes were often finished away from the quarry. The tool maker would complete an axe by grinding to make a sharp cutting edge. This edge, while not as sharp as a chipped stone tool, was much more durable. When the edge was broken or chipped, the axe could be sharpened again and again.

Grinding was usually done on sandstone outcrops, often leaving deep grooves. Sometimes the whole axe was ground to a smooth glossy finish.

Place Identification  
Mini Poster 8

## Characteristics

- Ground-edge axes come in different shapes, but they are usually either round or oval. They are sometimes rounded and narrow at one end, and slightly broader and straighter at the cutting edge.
- Most are 50–200 millimetres long, 40–100 millimetres wide and 20–60 millimetres thick.
- Typically they are 'lens shaped' when viewed from the side.
- They were made from hard types of stone, particularly basalt or greenstone, and worn river pebbles.
- They may have one or more ground cutting edges, and they may be polished smooth all over. The ground surfaces are usually highly polished.
- They may have a groove pecked around their 'waist' so it is easier to attach a handle.
- Complete axes are rare. It is more common to find smaller, broken, polished fragments.



Ground-edge Axes with wooden hafts

Aboriginal people often used natural resin and plant fibre or kangaroo sinew to attach the axe to a short wooden handle.

### **How Did Aboriginal People Use Ground-edge Axes?**

Aboriginal people used axes to cut down small trees, chop wood, remove tree bark for canoes and shelters, butcher larger animals and undertake many other tasks. They also used axes as weapons, ceremonial objects and valuable trade items.

Many axes come from a large greenstone quarry at Mount William, near Lancefield. Axes from this quarry have been found up to 800 kilometres from Mount William, but not in the eastern half of Victoria. The Gunai/Kurnai people in the east had their own quarries and system of trade. Studies of the distribution of Mount William axes have demonstrated that this trade boundary existed for a long time, possibly several thousand years.

### **What Natural Rocks Look Similar to Ground-edge Axes?**

Ground-edge axes are easy to distinguish from natural rocks. Smooth, hard, river pebbles may look like the axes, but they do not have the sharp edges.

### **Why are Ground-edge Axes Important?**

Aboriginal ground-stone axes are an important link for Aboriginal people today with their culture and their past. We know of the custodians of some quarries where stone axes were made, and their descendants are still alive today.

The axes are a valuable source of information about the past way of life of Aboriginal people.

### **Are Aboriginal Ground-edge Axes under Threat?**

Ground-edge axes are strong and durable. Unfortunately, because they are obviously Aboriginal artefacts, many have been taken by artefact collectors and the general public. We know little about these collected axes: information about their age, original location and links with other artefacts has been lost forever.

Natural processes such as wind and water erosion may disturb axes, but human interference such as ploughing and development (and particularly souvenir collecting) poses the greatest threat to these artefacts.

Aboriginal Victoria records the location, dimensions and condition of Aboriginal ground-edge axes. The aim is to have a permanent written and photographic record of this important part of the heritage of all Australians.

### **Are Aboriginal Ground-edge Axes Protected?**

The law protects all Aboriginal cultural places and artefacts in Victoria. It is illegal to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Ground-edge axes and other artefacts should not be removed from site.

It is also illegal to sell artefacts without a cultural heritage permit. Information about permits may be obtained from Aboriginal Victoria.

### **What to Do If You Find a Ground-edge Axe?**

Do not disturb or remove it. Check whether the object has the typical characteristics of an Aboriginal ground-edge axe. If it does, record its location and write a brief description of its condition. Note whether it is under threat of disturbance.

Please help to preserve Aboriginal cultural places by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Victoria.

Contact:

Heritage Services  
Aboriginal Victoria  
Department of Premier & Cabinet  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC,  
3002  
Telephone: 1800 762 003  
[Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au)

June 2008

Copyright State Government of Victoria 2008.  
Authorised by the Victoria Government, Melbourne

ISBN 978-1-921331-59-6

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage.html>

**ABORIGINAL VICTORIA**



# ABORIGINAL SCARRED TREES



Aboriginal people in canoes on Lake Tyers 1886

## What are Scarred Trees?

Aboriginal people caused scars on trees by removing bark for various purposes. The scars, which vary in size, expose the sapwood on the trunk or branch of a tree.

## Where are Scarred Trees Found?

Scarred trees are found all over Victoria, wherever there are mature native trees, especially box and red gum. They often occur along major rivers, around lakes and on flood plains.

## What to Do if You Find a Scarred Tree

- Check the scar for key characteristics.
- Record the tree's location and its condition.
- Note whether it is under threat of disturbance.

Please help to preserve Aboriginal cultural places by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Victoria

Contact:

Heritage Services  
Aboriginal Victoria  
Department of Premier & Cabinet  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC, 3002  
Telephone: 1800 762 003  
[Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au)

## Why Did Aboriginal People Remove Bark?

Aboriginal people removed bark from trees to make canoes, containers and shields and to build temporary shelters.

They also cut toe holds in trees to make them easier to climb. This allowed them to use trees as lookouts, hunt for possums or bee hives, and cut bark higher up in the

Place Identification  
Mini Poster 1

## Characteristics

- Scar more-or-less regular in shape, often with parallel sides and slightly pointed or rounded ends.
- Scar usually stops above ground level.
- Exposed sapwood free of tree knots or branches or evidence of a branch having been at the top of the scar.
- Exposed sapwood at the base and (more rarely) at the top of the scar may show stone or steel axe cuts.
- Tree an Australian native species which occurs naturally in the district.
- Tree usually over 200 years old.



Scarred tree

tree. Sometimes trees were carved or decorated, but examples are rare in Victoria.

To remove bark, the Aboriginal people cut an outline of the shape they wanted using stone axes or, once Europeans had arrived, steel axes. The bark was then levered off. Sometimes the axe marks made by Aboriginal people are still visible on the sapwood of the tree, but usually the marks will be hidden because the bark has grown back. The amount of bark regrowth may help you tell the age of the scar. Sometimes, if the scar is very old, it will be completely covered by regrowth.

### What Other Human Activities Can Cause Scars?

European settlers also removed bark from trees to build huts. Generally, these scars will be more square or rectangular in shape than those created by Aboriginal people.

Boundary or survey markers made by European settlers and farmers also caused scars. Survey markers are usually triangular and may have a number or date carved or written on the sapwood.

Trees close to roads may be damaged by passing vehicles. Scars caused in this way will usually only occur below a height of about two metres.

### What Natural Processes Can Cause Scars?

Fire, lightning, storms and floods can also cause scars on trees.

Fire damage is distinctive: the scar is usually triangular, wide at the base and tapering up from the ground, and the wood is charred. A scar caused by a falling branch often looks like a 'keyhole', with the stub of the branch at the top and a tail of torn sapwood beneath.

Scars caused by falling trees can sometimes be identified by examining nearby tree stumps. These will usually give some idea of the direction in which the tree fell. If that direction matches the position of the scar, the scar may be natural.

### Why are Scarred Trees Important?

Scarred trees provide valuable clues about the use of perishable materials by Aboriginal people. Because wood often rots away, Victorian museums have only a small number of Aboriginal wooden artefacts. Most of our information on Aboriginal use of wood comes from the writings of early settlers and explorers.

Scarred trees are easier to find than many other archaeological sites. They tell us where Aboriginal people used to live, and help us find other types of archaeological sites, such as scatters of stone tools. Scarred trees also provide Aboriginal people today with an important link to their culture and their past.

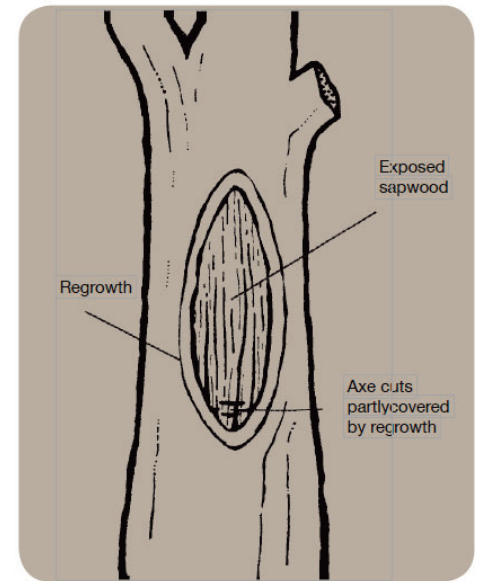
### Threats to Scarred Trees

Scarred trees are disappearing because of natural aging and decay, timber cutting, environmental problems such as salinity and fire. Aboriginal Victoria records scarred trees so that we will have a permanent photographic and written record of this important part of the heritage of all Australians. Some scarred trees require attention, so they will be preserved for future generations.

### Are Scarred Trees Protected?

All Aboriginal cultural places in Victoria are protected by law. Aboriginal artefacts are also protected.

It is against the law to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Artefacts should not be removed from sites.



Scar Identification Characteristics

June 2008

Copyright State Government of Victoria 2008. Authorised by the Victoria Government, Melbourne

ISBN 978-1-921331-52-7

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage.html>

**ABORIGINAL VICTORIA**

# ABORIGINAL SURFACE SCATTERS



A typical surface scatter found when an older land surface has been exposed

## What are Aboriginal Surface Scatters?

Surface artefact scatters are the material remains of past Aboriginal people's activities. Scatter sites usually contain stone artefacts, but other material such as charcoal, animal bone, shell and ochre may also be present. No two surface scatters are exactly the same.

## Where are They Found?

Surface scatters can be found wherever Aboriginal occupation has occurred in the past.

Aboriginal campsites were most frequently located near a reliable source of fresh water, so surface scatters are often found near rivers or streams where erosion or disturbance has exposed an older land surface.

## What to do if You Find an Aboriginal Surface Scatter?

Do not disturb the place or remove any material. Check whether the place has the characteristics of an Aboriginal surface scatter. If it does, record its location and write a brief description of its condition. Note whether it is under threat of disturbance.

Please help to preserve Aboriginal cultural places by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Victoria.

Contact:

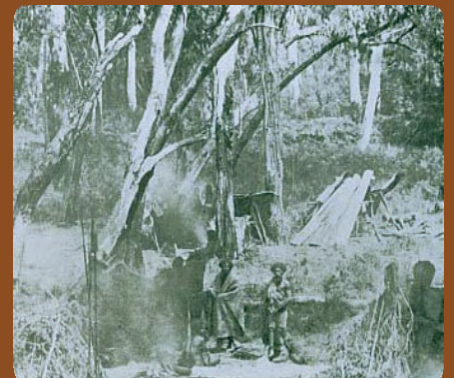
Heritage Services  
Aboriginal Victoria  
Department of Premier & Cabinet  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC,  
3002

Telephone: 1800 762 003  
[Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au)

Place Identification  
Mini Poster 6

## Characteristics

- The size of scatters may vary from one square metre to one hectare.
- Scatters may contain a few artefacts or many thousands.
- They generally consist of chipped stone artefacts (see Mini Poster 4), but sometimes contain animal bone, shell, charcoal, hearth stones, clay balls and ochre.
- Surface scatters are most visible where erosion, roadwork, ploughing or earthworks have disturbed the ground.
- They can be exposed as a concentration of material on the ground, or as a thin layer (or layers) of material in the side of a bank or



This Aboriginal camp shows how surface scatters were created  
State Library of Victoria

## What Produced Surface Scatters?

Surface scatters are the remains of past Aboriginal campsites and other activities. Aboriginal people produced and left the scatter material in the course of their daily life. Activities that produced surface scatters include:

- manufacture of stone implements for a range of everyday tasks;
- production and maintenance of weapons, tools and other items made of wood and bone;
- construction of shelters and huts;
- preparation and consumption of meals;
- preparation of clothes and blankets from animal skins;
- social and spiritual activities.

Away from the camp, activities that produced surface scatters include:

- wood chopping and the removal of bark from trees;
- preparation of large items such as canoes;
- hunting and game processing;
- gathering and processing fruit and vegetables.

Scatters may be the remains from a number of activities in a camp, or from just one activity away from the main camp site.

Large surface scatters with many types of artefacts indicate favoured camping areas. These were often resource-rich areas such as swamps, lakes or riverine environments.

Aboriginal people returned to these locations repeatedly, stayed for longer periods, and undertook a wider range of activities. A large scatter may have many thousands of artefacts and cover more than a hectare. The repeated use of an area may have left a dense deposit that is many layers thick, or a huge scatter consisting of artefacts from many overlapping occupations.

Smaller places generally resulted from single, short occupations such as overnight camps and dinner camps. Some consist of debris at an activity area away from the main camp. Small scatters may cover only a few square metres, consist of only one layer and comprise only a

few artefacts. They can be found anywhere, whereas larger scatters are rarer in resource-poor areas such as coastal plains, highlands and deserts.

## What Other Factors Produce Surface Scatters?

Scatters of naturally occurring gravel, particularly quartz, may be mistaken for Aboriginal surface scatters. Gravel usually has rounded edges and originates in the immediate area. Imported gravel, particularly from roadwork or building construction, can also be mistaken for surface scatters. Imported gravel has sharp edges and a narrow size range, and it is usually found around earthworks.

## Why are Aboriginal Surface Scatters Important?

Surface scatters of artefacts are one of the most common types of Aboriginal places. They provide important information about past Aboriginal people's settlement patterns and lifestyles.

Some organic materials (such as charcoal, bone and shell) found in scatters can be dated by radiocarbon dating. These dates tell us when people were living in a particular area. Artefacts in the surface scatters can show how Aboriginal culture changed over time. The presence of stone from other areas can indicate trade, exchange and contact between different groups that lived many kilometres apart.

Surface scatters are an important link for Aboriginal people today with their culture and past.

## Are Aboriginal Surface Scatters under Threat?

Aboriginal surface scatters can be disturbed or destroyed by people or natural processes such as wind and water. Weathering and erosion can damage or disperse artefacts,



Stone Artefacts like these are commonly found in Victorian surface scatters

as can trampling by hard-hoofed animals and rabbit burrowing. Human activities such as mining, road building, damming, clearing and construction can disturb and destroy artefact sites.

Aboriginal Victoria records the location, dimensions and condition of Aboriginal scatters. The aim is to have a permanent photographic and written record of this important part of the heritage of all Australians. Management works around Aboriginal surface scatters, such as the eradication of rabbits and erosion control, help preserve the places for future generations.

## Are Aboriginal Surface Scatters Protected?

All Aboriginal cultural places in Victoria are protected by law. Aboriginal artefacts are also protected.

It is illegal to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Artefacts should not be removed from site.

June 2008

Copyright State Government of Victoria 2008.  
Authorised by the Victoria Government, Melbourne  
ISBN 978-1-921331-57-2

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage.html>

**ABORIGINAL VICTORIA**

# ABORIGINAL MOUNDS



Mound on flood plain

## What are Aboriginal Mounds?

Aboriginal mounds are places where Aboriginal people lived over long periods of time. Mounds often contain charcoal, burnt clay or stone heat retainers from cooking ovens, animal bones, shells, stone tools and, sometimes, Aboriginal burials.

## Where are They Found?

Usually near rivers, lakes or swamps but occasionally some distance from water.

Mounds often occur on floodplains and the banks of watercourses.

They are also found on dunes and sometimes among rock outcrops on higher ground.

## What to Do if You Find a Mound

Check whether the mound has the typical characteristics of an Aboriginal mound. If it does,

record its location and write a brief description of its condition. Note whether it is under threat of disturbance.

Please help to preserve Aboriginal cultural places by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Victoria.

Contact:

Heritage Services  
Aboriginal Victoria  
Department of Premier & Cabinet  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC, 3002

Telephone: 1800 762 003

[Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Aboriginal.Heritage@dpc.vic.gov.au)

## What Produced Aboriginal Mounds?

Aboriginal people often cooked their food in earth ovens. To do this, they heated stones or burnt clay lumps and placed them in a pit. The food – a kangaroo or tubers for example

Place  
Identification  
Mini Poster 2

## Characteristics

- Circular or oval shape.
- Often less than 50 cm high and 10 m wide, though sometimes much larger.
- Dark (often black) and sometimes greasy sediment.
- Lumps of burnt clay or stone and small fragments of charcoal often present.
- Shells, animal bones, stone tools and human burials sometimes present.
- Rabbit burrows present.

In land which has been extensively ploughed the site of a mound will appear as an area of dark stained earth. If you look closely, you may find charcoal fragments, burnt clay lumps and hearth stones.



Ploughed



– was placed on top of the heat retainers and the pit was filled in. Once the food was cooked, it was removed, and all the cooking debris, such as stone, clay and ash, was swept out. Over time, the debris from cooking and other domestic activities combined with natural sediments to form a mound.

Aboriginal people usually built shelters or huts from bark or wood. Heaped earth was sometimes used as a foundation, or to strengthen and insulate the walls of these structures. Fires were frequently built in front of, or near, the shelters. Artefacts such as stone tools were often made close by. It is likely that the debris produced by these activities, as well as the wood and bark from the eventual collapse of the shelters, helped the build up of mounds.

### **How Else Can Mounds Be Formed?**

Mounds created by Europeans in more recent times can be mistaken for Aboriginal mounds. In particular, the common farming practice of piling and burning tree stumps is likely to produce a mound which contains burnt clay, burnt stone and charcoal.

Europeans also burnt timber to make charcoal for use in metal smelting. Mounds resulting from this practice usually contain large quantities of charcoal, often in large chunks.

Neither of these types of mound contain stone tools, shells or animal bones.

Mounds can also form naturally. Low rises can occur where a clay ground surface has cracked and swollen. Hummocks occur where sand has been trapped by vegetation. Mounds may form near rivers and creeks where sediment is washed up over tree branches or small shrubs. These mounds will not contain burnt materials, and will usually not contain stone tools, shells or animal bones.

### **Why are Aboriginal Mounds Important?**

Mounds provide valuable information about past Aboriginal settlement and lifestyles. Most known mound sites are less than 3000 years old.

The relatively common occurrence of mounds in some parts of Victoria (particularly the Western District and Murray Valley) after this date, may represent a change in the way Aboriginal people in these areas cooked and made camp.

Mounds provide Aboriginal people today with an important link to their culture and their past. Mounds which contain Aboriginal burials are particularly significant.

### **Threats to Aboriginal Mounds**

Because mounds are part of the landscape, they cannot be preserved in museums. The loose, soft soil often found in mounds attracts burrowing animals, particularly rabbits, which severely disturb these sites. Ripping of rabbit warrens, as well as ploughing and laser levelling of agricultural land, has destroyed many mounds.

Aboriginal Victoria records the location, dimensions, and condition of Aboriginal mounds so that we will have a permanent record of this important part of the heritage of all Australians. Management works, such as the eradication of rabbits and erosion control, are carried out so that Aboriginal mounds can be preserved for future generations.

### **Are Aboriginal Mounds Protected?**

All Aboriginal cultural places in Victoria are protected by law. Aboriginal artefacts are also protected.

It is against the law to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Artefacts should not be removed from site.

June 2008

Copyright State Government of Victoria 2008.  
Authorised by the Victoria Government, Melbourne

ISBN 978-1-921331-53-4

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage.html>

**ABORIGINAL VICTORIA**

