

VALUE STATEMENT



Site Description

Soldiers Point is a rocky promontory located in Worimi Maaiangal country on the southern shores of Port Stephens in the mid north coastal area of New South Wales. It is situated in close proximity to the coastal township of Nelson Bay and is 50km north of Newcastle (See Figure 1).

The subject land is on the north-western side of the point with views to the west and northwest across Port Stephens. Archaeological evidence on Soldiers Point shows that Aboriginal people were living there before European colonisation.

As per the Act the land has been identified as containing the categories of Cultural Significance, Natural Area Foreshore, Park and Sportsground (see Figure 4). While the whole of the site has been considered as having cultural significance to Aboriginal people, the individually identified areas of significance (from previous studies) are outlined in Section 4 and Figure 5 and their specific management requirements are also outlined in this section.

The steep slopes in the north-western part of the site physically separate the site from the adjoining park and from the boat ramp area. However, there is potential for vehicular access to Everitt Park to be developed at the extreme north-eastern corner of the site. The steep embankment in the northwest marks the location of a former quarry.

Immediately adjacent to the site is a privately owned marina complex which is supplemented by nearby permanent boat moorings. The boat launching ramp provides access to the southern parts of Port Stephens and is well patronised throughout the year. Council owned recreational facilities are located on the opposing side of Ridgeway Avenue and include tennis courts, picnic facilities and play equipment.

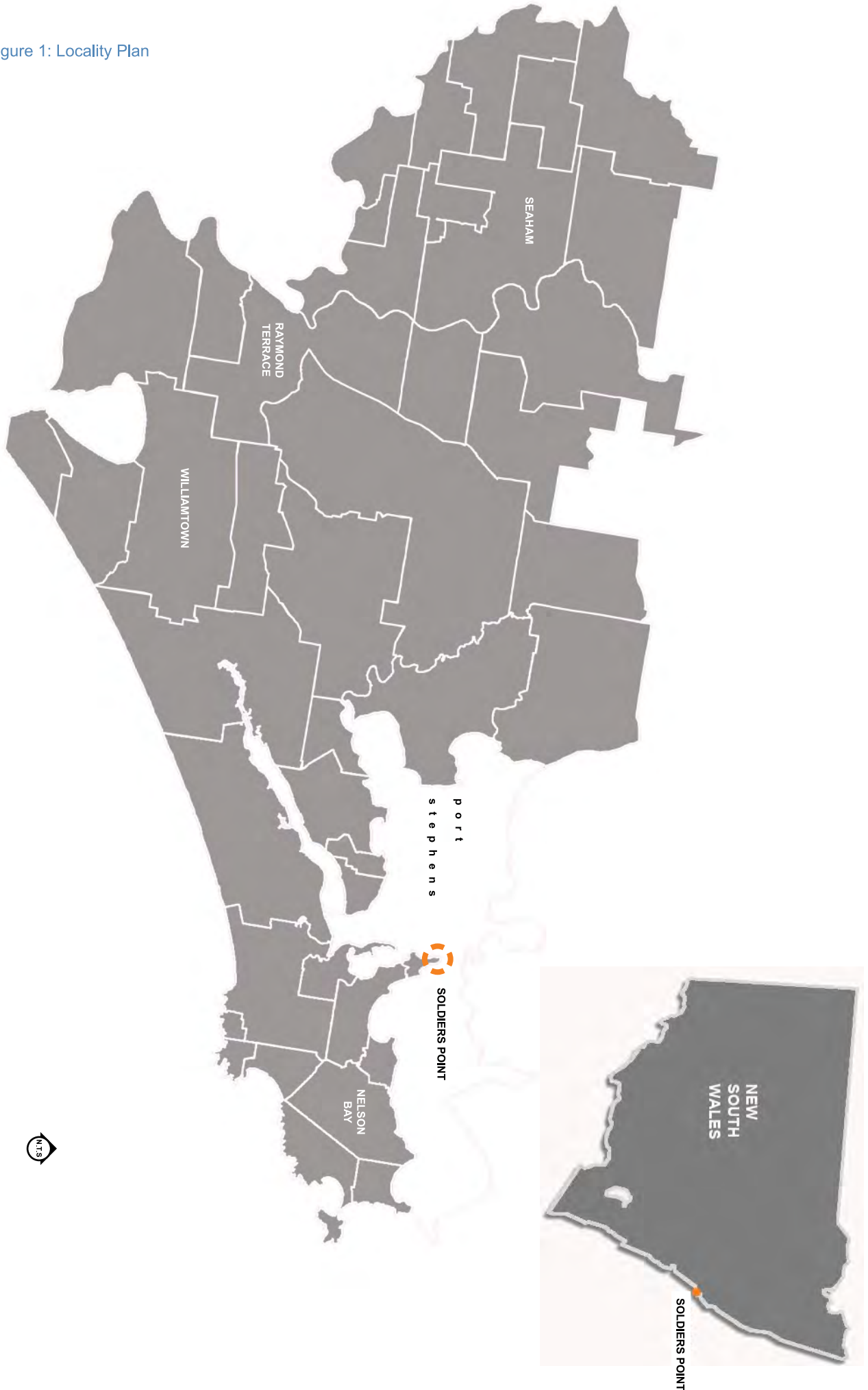
The land in question has been subject to a range of activities over the years. Historically Everitt Park was subject to extensive quarrying and the signs of such activity are quite evident. The north-eastern portion of the site has been terraced and the natural landform in this area has been altered considerably. Erosion has become evident over the years and the movement of sand on the waterfront requires attention in the future.

Within the site the following buildings/structures are provided: Port Stephens Yacht Club, Thou Walla Sunset Retreat (including the amenities building, offices and cabins), Everitt Park amenities building, Soldiers Point Memorial Community Hall, boat ramp, Spencer Park amenities building and tennis court facilities.

The site is bounded by Port Stephens to the West, North and North-east. To the East the site is bounded by private residential dwellings consisting of single dwellings and multi-story apartments as well as street frontage along Mitchell Street and Ridgeway Ave to the South.



Figure 1: Locality Plan



Aboriginal Place Significance

The Soldiers Point area plays an important role in understanding the history and present day culture of the Worimi Maaiangal people and other Aboriginal families which settled on the southern harbour of Port Stephens. Understanding the significance of the area to the Worimi people is best summed up by the follow quote:

“The Worimi people view land and sea country as one living entity, interconnected through many diverse environmental systems which include rivers, creeks, streams, wetlands, waterholes, springs, the ocean, all wildlife and species and natural resources. Land to Worimi people is Mother Earth. Land is the basis of our culture, history, heritage, language, beliefs, rituals, religion, spirituality, ceremonies, customs, storytelling, values, law, lore, social gatherings and identity.”

Ridgeway Bissett (2007)

Soldiers Point has a continuous history of Aboriginal settlement and the Maaiangal people and other Aboriginal families have a direct attachment to the place based on residency, use of the area for family holiday visits, access to marine based work opportunities or as part of organised church events. The most significant cultural features of the area are burial sites, middens and ceremonial areas - which are known to some members of the Aboriginal community and form an important component of the cultural landscape.

These sites provide a tangible and important link to traditional and historical Worimi customs and traditions. According to some reports, particularly Dallas *et al* (1996), the eastern section of Soldiers Point was identified as an area for men’s initiations, a custom which was recorded across the region. Importantly, female participants in the Dallas *et al* (1996) study knew of this custom and, as women, chose to walk around this area. This custom is a contemporary observance of a key aspect of Worimi culture - the differentiation between men and women with regard to sacred knowledge, practices and energy within landscapes.

Archaeological sites recorded at Soldiers Point include;

Midden lens along the western side of the point, identified in Figure 6 as Area 1a and 1b. The lenses are currently visible and eroding out of disturbed embankments and the area at the Marina carpark turn-around has in the past been stabilised under wood-chip. (Dallas *et al* 1996).

Midden lenses located on the walking track and shoreline at the northern end of Soldiers Point identified in Figure 6 as Area 2. This site is highly disturbed being located at the interface of an access path and rocky shoreline. (Dallas *et al* 1996:28)

Another lens is visibly eroding around the area of the access steps adjacent to the boat ramp and car park. As the lens is visible in disturbed areas, it is likely that the shell material exists, but is not visible, in non-disturbed areas along the western foreshore.



Aboriginal Place Significance

Below is a summary listing of key events in recorded history of the Worimi peoples in Nelson Bay and surrounding areas taken from OEH 2013:

1791	Convict ship Salamander enters the bay.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:21
1795	W.R. Broughton of H.M.S Providence records four ex-convicts living with Worimi people.	Bartlett 1980:9
1796	Mr. Grimes fires on a Worimi person, reportedly killing the individual.	Collins 1798:342 in Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:21
1822	Land acquired by Captain William Cromarty.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
1828	Land Grant/transfer to Australian Agricultural Company (AAC). Gazettal does not preclude use of Soldiers Point by Worimi.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
1829	AAC establishes a sheep station on the Karuah River.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:22
1838/41	AAC reports to the Select Committees of the NSW Legislative Assembly indicate a level of employment of Worimi people on the Station.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:22
1861	Soldiers Point known as an Aboriginal 'Village Reserve'.	Cowlshaw 1996:1
1873	Report by William Scott of a significant Worimi population decrease, approximately 50%, in the area.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:22
1873	Report of permissive occupancy of 40 acres at Bagnalls Beach given to Willy Price.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:22
1880's	Reports of conflict between Worimi and timber cutters at Karuah.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:22
1885	Billy Price taken to court after an assault on a man at Stockton, noted as "being of an unsound mind".	Newspaper Clipping 1885 provided by Viola Brown
1884	Karuah Mission/Aboriginal Reserve established.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:22
1896	Linguistic and ethnographic study of Worimi people at western Port Stephens (Karuah) by Enright. Records the people on the southern shoreline as Maaiangal.	Dallas and Cowlshaw 1994:28
July 1908	William Ridgeway declared King (known as King Billy) .	A.I.M December 1908.



October 1915	Notification of Aboriginal Reserve 51060 at Bagnall Beach.	8 th Edition shire of Tomaree Map (1931)
May 1916	Acquisition of Aboriginal Reserves by Commonwealth Government.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
1919	William Ridgeway (King Billy) passes away.	A.I.M December 1919.
1921	Construction of Louisa Ridgeway's wooden house.	Cowlishaw 1996:4
1925	Record by Enright of the Sandy Point or Salamander Bay women's waterhole.	Dallas and Cowlishaw 1994:34
1950	Report in Newcastle Morning Herald (18th August 1950) quotes the superintendent of the AAC adapted the Aboriginal name Thou-Walla which it is claimed to mean meeting place.	Cowlishaw 1996:2
1st Jan 1955	Purchase of Soldiers Point by Port Stephens Council from the Commonwealth.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
1961	Development of the holiday park by Port Stephens Council.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
1960's	Demolition of the Feeny's house for construction of the camping ground road.	Cowlishaw 1996:4
1980	Protest by Worimi at Soldiers Point.	Cowlishaw 1996:3
1993	Production of Development Strategy Report (Mandis Report) by Port Stephens Council recommends redevelopment to target mid-budget travellers.	ERM Mitchell McCotter Pty. Ltd. 1998:1
1995	Creation of Soldiers Point Holiday Park Development Consultative Committee.	ERM Mitchell McCotter Pty. Ltd. 1998:2
1996	Assessment of archaeological, anthropological and community concerns undertaken for Soldiers Point Holiday Park redevelopment.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
1998	Original NPWS Aboriginal Place assessment concluded.	NPWS internal file
1999	Development of Soldiers Point Aboriginal Place Plan of Management.	Port Stephens Council 1999:4
2004	Amendment to Soldiers Point Aboriginal Place Plan of Management.	ERM Mitchell McCotter Pty. Ltd. 1998:4



Aboriginal Place Declaration

Declaring an 'Aboriginal Place' is a way of recognising and legally protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in New South Wales. Land in NSW that is deemed to have special significance for Aboriginal culture, including public and private land, can be declared as an Aboriginal Place.

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) has an ongoing program of assessing and recommending the declaration and gazettal of areas as Aboriginal Places throughout NSW. These declarations are a conservation tool and advance the recognition, protection and understanding of Aboriginal cultural values throughout NSW.

The proposed Aboriginal Place was nominated by Les Ridgeway (deceased), former Chairperson, Worimi Traditional Aboriginal Owners and Elders Group in response to ongoing concerns over further development in the area and to demonstrate the importance of land to Worimi culture. The nomination has the support of the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council and a number of Aboriginal community members, however there is some dissent within the Worimi community over some of the claims of cultural values of some zones. Dissent within the Aboriginal community of this nature is not unreasonable. The lack of written records of Aboriginal history in the early part of colonisation and the disruption to the oral histories and stories of the Worimi people, caused by separation of people from the land to Aboriginal Missions and segregated schools, all combine to create a non-uniform picture of the significant sites and cultural values of the land.

This PoM highlights the cultural significance of the Soldiers Point area as best possible and provides guidance for its management as a declared Aboriginal Place. Council has been involved in the early stages of the proposed Soldiers Point Aboriginal Place nomination and, despite differing views of the Aboriginal Place within the Aboriginal community, is supportive of Soldiers Point being declared an Aboriginal Place subject to the strategies outlined in the Plan.



Aboriginal Place Significance

The values associated with the special significance to Aboriginal culture include primary values and associated values. These values are specific, but are not limited to:

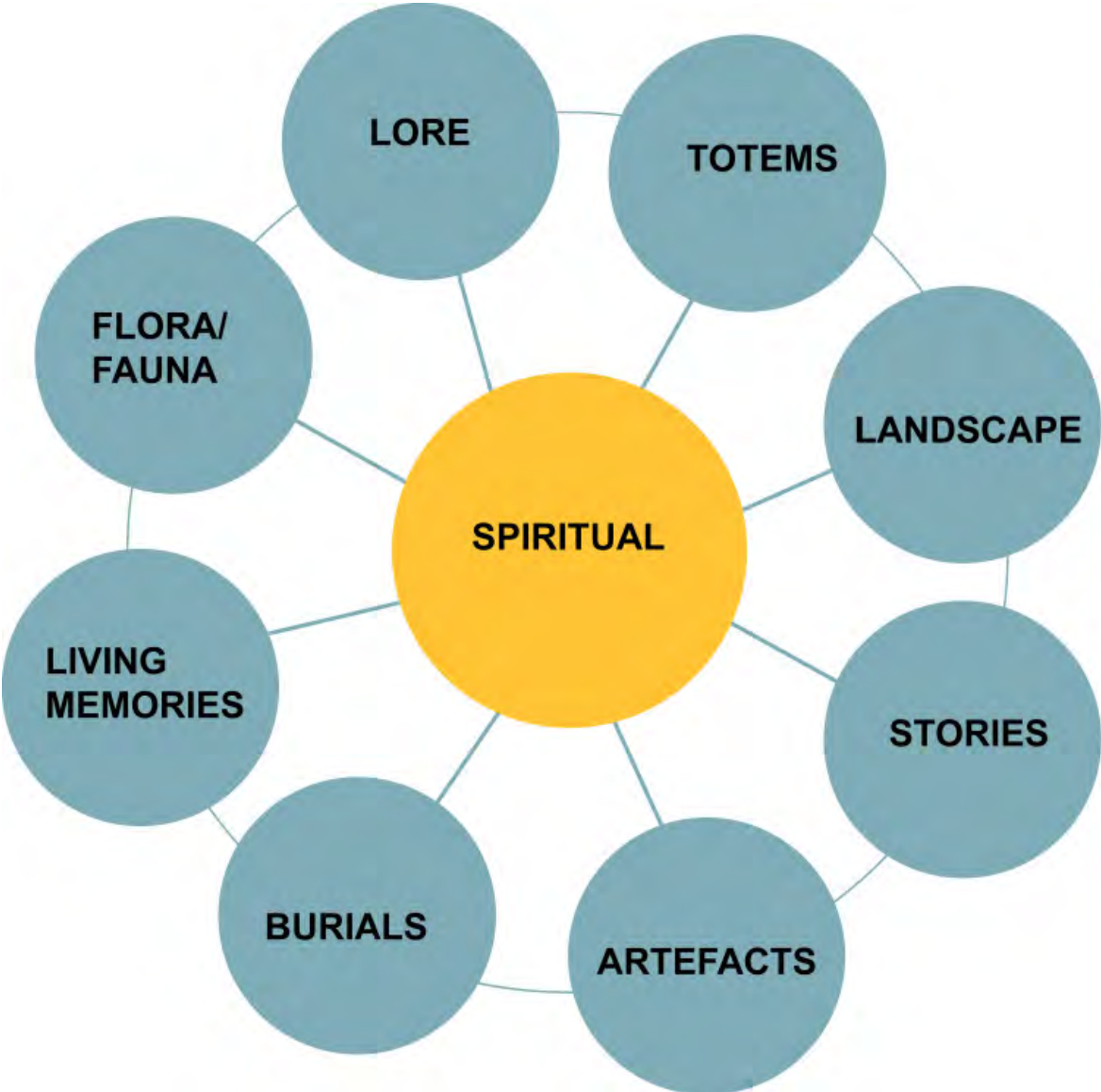
Primary cultural values	Examples at Soldiers Point
The landscape	The landscape including sea, creeks and streams and the flora and fauna of Port Stephens and Soldiers Point as it is, as it was and as it was created.
Associated cultural values	Examples at Soldiers Point
The stories of the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationships between Maaiangal people and other Aboriginal families and later on non-Aboriginal families - Association with the Karuah Mission - Church gatherings
The Worimi Lore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Men's ceremonial site - Area where traditional practices and customs can be undertaken
Artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Burials - Middens
Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Totems
Flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Totems - History of scar trees
Uses of the land/water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Worimi meeting place - Former dwellings on the site - Former Aboriginal Reserve and camp - Fishing and marine based activities - Employment of local Aboriginal people in the early fishing industry

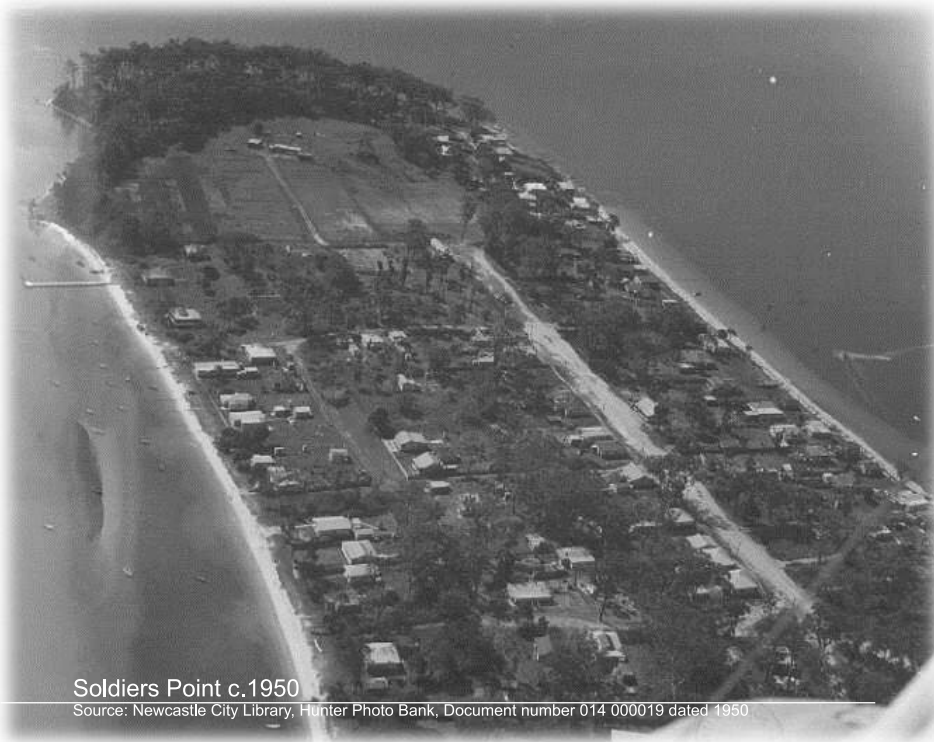
Local Aboriginal people have a strong spiritual and emotional attachment to the area. It is a place where Aboriginal families lived and where traditional knowledge and cultural life was sustained. The significance of Soldiers Point has accumulated over time and embraces the richness and diversity of Aboriginal life including the strong association with the marine environment and the history of the region. For many, Soldiers Point is a key to understanding the past.

For non-Aboriginal people, understanding the cultural values that the Worimi community have for Soldiers Point may be described as the whole landscape having a spiritual nature where all of the cultural values are interconnected. Figure 2 is an interpretation of how the cultural values of Soldiers Point are understood by the Worimi community.



Figure 2: Diagram representing cultural values of Soldiers Point by Worimi people





Soldiers Point c.1950

Source: Newcastle City Library, Hunter Photo Bank, Document number 014 000019 dated 1950

European History

The following points provide a summary of the developments at Soldiers Point, since the commencement of European colonisation:

- Port Stephens was utilised by settlers, surveyors and sailors, arriving in the area between 1791 till 1821.
- Land acquired by Captain William Cromarty in 1822. Joint use of Soldiers Point with an Army Garrison that was established prior to 1826.
- Land grant/transfer in 1828 of a million acres of the domain of the Worimi Aboriginal people to the Australian Agricultural Company. This resulted in the Worimi continuing to live on Soldiers Point.
- Logging of timber resources from surrounding area, including cedar.
- The land was a Reserve from at least 1861 until its residents were forcibly removed to the Aboriginal reserves at Karuah and Sandy Point in 1915.
- The Commonwealth acquired Soldiers Point and adjacent land on 25 May 1916.
- Port Stephens Council purchased the land from the Commonwealth of Australia on the 1 January 1955.
- Soldiers Point Memorial Community Hall was built and officially opened on 19 December 1959.
- Development of the existing Holiday Park (1961), adjacent marina and the Yacht Club after 1950. This presented a change in focus to recreational activities for the general community as compared to its use in previous years.
- Port Stephens Council produced plans for the redevelopment of the existing Holiday Park in 1993 which was met with some strong opposition from the existing tenants/users of the Holiday Park. Issues raised at this time have since been resolved through a number of channels. Local Aboriginal groups also raised concerns as a result of the proposed development of the area. Extensive consultation has been undertaken to manage these concerns.

Table 3 – Soldiers Point Profile

Owner	Port Stephens Council
Management	Port Stephens Council
Land Area (m2)	5.9 hectares; approximately 59,500m2
Lot and DP	Lot 322 DP 636840 Lot 1 DP 211909 Lot 2 DP 211909 Lot 31 DP 596092 Lot 205 DP27084
Zoning	RE1 Public Recreation under <i>Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013</i>
Land Classification	Community Operational Land at Lot 31 DP596092
Adjoining Land Uses	Swing moorings
Surrounding Development	Low density residential development, characterised by single residential dwellings Multi story tourism accommodation
Access and Circulation	Soldiers Point is primarily accessed by car
Community Land Categorisations	Park Area of Cultural Significance Natural Area – Foreshore Sportsground
Focus Areas	Focus Area 1: North-Eastern Foreshore Focus Area 2: Everitt Park Focus Area 3: Car Park and Boating facilities Focus Area 4: Western Foreshore Focus Area 5: Western Holiday Park Focus Area 6: Eastern Holiday Park and Community Hall Focus Area 7: Port Stephens Yacht Club Focus Area 8: Spencer Park
Current Uses	Passive formal and informal recreation spaces Thou Walla Sunset Retreat Port Stephens Yacht Club Soldiers Point Memorial Community Hall Boat launching and retrieving facilities Car parking General outdoor recreation facilities i.e. picnic facilities, seating, amenities block Dinghy racks Spencer Park tennis courts
Current Leases and Licences	Port Stephens Yacht Club - Commercial Lease Soldiers Point Tennis Club – Licence Agreement Thou Walla Sunset Retreat – Port Stephens Council business unit under contract.
Current Master Plan	Soldiers Point Plan of Management Master Plan 2015



Table 4 – Description of Properties covered by this Plan of Management

Lot	D.P Number	Street Address	Owner/Classification	Comments	Aboriginal Place Nomination
Crn Lot 1	DP211909	1B Mitchell Street	Port Stephens Council/ Community Land	Includes Community Hall	Yes
Lot 2	DP211909	1A Mitchell Street	Port Stephens Council/ Community Land	Includes Holiday Park	Yes
Lot 322	DP636840	9 Mitchell Street	Port Stephens Council/ Community Land	Foreshore land, Boat Ramp, Everitt Park	Yes
Lot 31	DP596092	2B Ridgeway Ave	Port Stephens Council/ Operational and Community Land	Includes Port Stephens Yacht Club	Yes
Lot 205	DP27084	2A Soldiers Point Road	Port Stephens Council/ Community Land	Spencer Park Tennis Courts	Yes
		Ridgeway Ave	Port Stephens Council/Road Reserve	Aboriginal midden in road reserve AHIMS Site # 38-5-0152	Yes

Table 5 – Current leases and licences

	1	2
Lease / Licence	Lease	Licence – non-exclusive
Lessee	Port Stephens Yacht Squadron Limited	Soldiers Point Tennis Club
Facility	Yacht Club	Tennis Club
Address	2B Ridgeway Ave, Soldiers Point	2A Soldiers Point Road, Soldiers Point
Lease Classification	Commercial	Community
Term	21 years (01/07/2000 – 30/06/2021)	5 years (01/07/2014 – 30/06/2017)



Figure 3: Soldiers Point Land Property Description



