

# The Jordan River Levee Site

## Archaeology

- Aboriginal heritage investigations across the Brighton Bypass alignment commenced in 1990s. However the site at the Jordan River was not identified until late 2008 when it was described as a surface scatter of approximately 20 artefacts with potential for subsurface values due to the nature of the landscape feature.
- A subsurface investigation on the Jordan River levee commenced in early August 2009.
- In late August the Aboriginal community opposed continuation of the investigation until a number of issues that allowed greater involvement in decision making were agreed. This resulted in a five month delay.
- DIER's consultants completed an archaeological investigation of the Jordan River levee in February 2010. A final report on the investigation was made available on 2nd August 2010.
- This was the most extensive archaeological investigation of its type ever carried out in Tasmania. The investigation included the use of Ground Penetrating Radar which ruled out the presence of burials and Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) which indicated an approximate age of the site. OSL results showed that the levee began to form about 42,000 years ago and was occupied shortly after that time.
- The investigation identified and defined a levee deposit containing a subsurface stratified cultural deposit. The levee was determined to be the scientifically important site. The archaeologist refers to the levee as the JRL site and reports that it is only a part of a broader site that was as defined by Stone. The broader site does not contain the scientifically significant cultural deposit.
- Archaeologist Rob Paton questioned the extent of the Aboriginal site as it was initially recorded. Paton stated that "the original description is somewhat contradictory in its assessment of site size" (Addendum to Interim Report).



- The JRL site has been defined as being approximately 600m long and about 60m wide (Paton 2010:6), most of which is on private land.
- The levee deposit was found to be "...the oldest known and best stratified site in Tasmania, one of the oldest and most intact sites in Australia, and would rate in importance amongst those of similar age from elsewhere in the world" (Paton 2010:99).
- It has been incorrectly claimed that the site is the oldest in Australia and oldest in the southern hemisphere.
- Archaeologists established that the primary activities undertaken at the site were tool maintenance and rejuvenation. "The evidence of the artefact assemblage indicates that the site was used consistently for many thousands of years but that each visit was relatively short and made by Aboriginal groups that were relatively mobile" (Paton 2010:102).
- DIER accepts and respects the results of the investigation that the stratified levee deposit now known as the JRL site is a very important site and has responded accordingly by redesigning this section of the Brighton Bypass.
- The archaeological report notes that in light of the potential for the site to be very old "...DIER amended its proposal so as not to impact the JRL site, defined as the levee bank deposit. Instead they proposed a bridge that would span the JRL site with development impacts confined to the floodplain to the west and east of the levee bank deposit" (Paton 2010:1).
- The archaeologist strongly recommends that the levee (JRL site), "...as an archaeological site, be preserved and protected...in the short term measures need to be taken to preclude any development activities that would impact directly on the levee, as it is defined in this report" (Paton 2010:4). This has been achieved in the current proposal.
- Ever since the importance of the site was understood DIER intended to avoid impacts on it and to ultimately protect it. DIER can comply with the above recommendation.
- The investigation that was fully funded by DIER has resulted in a major contribution to the knowledge of Tasmanian Aboriginal prehistory.

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