



Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

protecting sacred sites across the territory

Request for Information Fact Sheet

A 'Request for Information' from the AAPA Records is available to anyone with an interest in specific areas of land or sea in the Northern Territory.

All requests require an account with the AAPA Online Portal. Accounts only require an email address and may be for businesses or individuals. Business accounts can use a generic email related to your business or individual accounts can have access. Correspondence will be sent to this email address.

It should be noted, only Aboriginal custodians, consulted as part of the Authority Certificate process, are able to define what is required to protect a site. The information provided through a Request for Information is not sufficient to undertake works with confidence that sacred sites won't be damaged.

Note: Functionality including interactive maps may be affected if not using the Google Chrome/Edge web browser.

There are three options when lodging a Request for Information:

Abstract of Records

An Abstract of Records is useful to anyone seeking to review sacred sites records for a particular area of land or sea. Applicants are provided with a written abstract and map of all of the known recorded and registered sacred sites within an area of land at the time the application is received.

It must be remembered that this is not a definitive way of determining the location of all sacred sites in a given area and only indicates sacred sites currently known to the AAPA.

The mapping product shows registered sacred sites, registered sacred site boundaries, recorded sites, recorded site boundaries, Authority Certificate boundaries and restricted work area boundaries from previously issued Authority Certificates. The coordinate point for a sacred site is a reference point only and does not necessarily indicate the location or extent of any specific site feature.

Obtaining an Abstract of Records is typically undertaken before viewing the more detailed information of the Registered Sacred Site Public Register or the Authority Certificate Public Register.

Note: AAPA does not provide sacred site information in a digital GIS format.

Viewing of the Registered Sacred Site Public Register

Anyone wishing to understand more about the features and traditions of registered sacred site may inspect the Register of Sacred Sites.

To view the Register of Sacred Sites you must apply through the AAPA Online Portal. The Register can be inspected electronically or at the Authority's offices. Copies and photographs are not allowed, but you may take your own notes.

This inspection provides the centre coordinate point of the sacred site, features of the site, geographic description, custodian groups and the tradition associated with the site.

You will need to provide a clearly specified project area and specify which Registered Sacred Site(s) you wish to view. Typically, the name of the Registered Sacred Site is obtained from an earlier Abstract of Records Request.

Information that relates to matters required to be kept secret according to Aboriginal tradition will not be provided.

Viewing of the Authority Certificate Public Register

The Register of Authority Certificates can be inspected electronically or at the Authority's offices. The Authority will provide access to information on Authority Certificates, subject to commercial and secrecy exclusions.

Authority Certificates relate directly to a specified project. Prior Authority Certificates are for information only and do not provide any protection for new works.

The available information includes a list of Authority Certificates granted or refused for a specified area, including the conditions for any works that may have been proposed for that area. Such conditions can include but are not limited to 'no ground disturbing works', 'no damage to trees', 'no removal of sand or gravel', 'no access' etc.

Please specify which Authority Certificates you would like to view. Typically, that information is obtained from an earlier Abstract of Records Request

Please Note: Copies of Authority Certificates can only be granted or authorised by the holder of the Certificate(s) and proof of such is required in writing.



FEES AND CHARGES

Abstract of Records

An abstract of the Authority's records (this includes a map showing known sacred sites). Charges are per Lot, Parcel or NT Portion under the NT Land Titles Act.

\$32.00 (23 revenue units)

Viewing of the Registered Sacred Sites Public Register.

Charges are per Sacred Site inspected.

\$32.00 (23 revenue units)

Viewing of the Authority Certificate Public Register

Are per inspection of Authority Certificate application and related Certificate.

\$32.00 (23 revenue units)

FAQ

I tried to create an AAPA Online Portal account but my email is already in use.

You may already have an NTG Land Services account that you use in another system. If this occurs contact ILIS Support on (08) 8995 5309 for assistance.

What do I receive when my Abstract of Records application has been processed?

A request for an Abstract of Records is the most popular form of Request for Information. You will receive a summary letter and a map of your request area with polygons and points representing AAPA records.

How long does an application take to process?

Applications can usually be processed in less than two weeks.



What is a registered sacred site?

Registered sites are sacred sites that Aboriginal custodians have asked the AAPA to protect and that have been comprehensively documented and evaluated by the AAPA. Registered sites include information on locations and boundaries. These make up the Register of Sacred Sites. Registration of a sacred site by the Board of the AAPA is considered as proof in a court of law that a place is indeed a Sacred Site.

What is a recorded sacred site?

Recorded sites are sacred sites that have been made known to the AAPA from a variety of sources. In many cases the AAPA has not been able to assess the accuracy of its information regarding recorded sites, nor have these sites been fully mapped. These sacred sites are still protected by the Sacred Sites Act.

The Abstract of Records shows there are no registered or recorded sites in the area of interest. Does this mean I can proceed with my works?

An Abstract of Records is a snapshot of the AAPA records at the time of the request. Unless the comprehensive work of an Authority Certificate has been done over the relevant area, it is possible there may be sacred sites not currently known to the Authority.

Whether you proceed with your works is a decision for you, however you should carefully consider the area concerned and the provisions of the Act (particularly those that address the protections offered by an Authority Certificate and the punishments prescribed for the offences set out in Part IV of the Act). All sacred sites, whether or not they are known to the Authority, are protected under the NT Sacred Sites Act.

The Abstract of Records shows there is a registered or recorded site(s) in the area of interest. Does this mean I cannot proceed with my works?

The existence of a sacred site does not necessarily mean that entry or works on or near the site are prohibited. To protect against prosecution for damaging a site, we recommend applying for an Authority Certificate. Authority Certificates set out what restrictions, if any, apply to specific works in proximity to a site.

Knowing the location of a sacred site is not sufficient to protect it. Only the Aboriginal custodians, consulted as part of the Authority Certificate process, are able to define what is required to protect a site.



There are “other sites” in the area of interest. What does this mean?

Other sites include archaeological places or objects. These places and objects are protected under the Heritage Act 2011 (NT).

There is a burial site in the area of interest. What does this mean?

Under the Criminal Code Act 1983 (NT) it is an offence to interfere with remains of a deceased person. It is also an offence contrary to the Heritage Act 2011 to interfere with the remains of a deceased Aboriginal person without authorisation under that Act.

In the event that any skeletal remains are unearthed it is your responsibility to stop works and immediately report such disturbance to the NT Police and the Director Heritage Branch, Department of Tourism and Culture.

No Authority Certificates have been issued in the area of interest. What does this mean?

It may mean the Authority has not undertaken detailed anthropological research in the area of interest. It may also mean sacred sites are in the area but are not yet recorded by the Authority.

My Abstract of Records says Authority Certificate Records are available for Public Inspection. What does this mean?

In an abstract provided by the Authority pursuant to regulation 7(3) of the Regulations, areas over which the Authority has previously issued an Authority Certificate are indicated on the map.

For these areas, the Authority has consulted custodians in the past about prior works. There may be conditions in the Authority Certificate. These conditions will relate to the works covered by that specific certificate only.

You can apply to view those prior Authority Certificates through the AAPA Online Portal.

The viewing will take place electronically or in the Authority's offices, which are located in Darwin and Alice Springs. No copies of the Authority Certificates will be provided without written permission from the relevant proponent. Photographs of Certificates are prohibited.

Information that is of a sensitive commercial nature or relates to matters required to be kept secret according to Aboriginal tradition will not be provided.



Does a previous Authority Certificate over the area of interest mean it will be cheaper and quicker to get another one for my works?

All Authority Certificates are specific to the works proposed. Every Certificate requires consultation with custodians to ensure free, prior and informed consent. It may be that earlier work in the area of interest will simplify the process, but many factors impact on the time and cost of the Authority Certificate work.

My Abstract of Records shows restricted work areas in the area of interest. What does this mean?

A restricted work area relates to an area identified in a previously issued Authority Certificate. It is an area that had restrictions on the kind of activities that were permitted in the area.

Restrictions on works can vary and are specific to each application and depend on the works proposed. Sometimes an Authority Certificate will prohibit any work in the area or will prevent certain activities, such as ground disturbing work, damage to trees, or the removal of sand or gravel.

Can I share or publish my Abstract of Records?

No. It is an offence under s38 of the Act to permit access to a document produced for a purpose of the Act without permission of the Authority.

The Abstract of Records has been provided to you by the Authority for the limited purpose of your consideration. Should you wish to share the abstract, you should write to the Authority seeking permission under s38 (1) of the Act. You should detail the purpose of sharing the Abstract of Records.

How to contact AAPA?

For any questions about the process, please contact the AAPA by email at enquiries.aapa@aapant.org.au or by phone on 8999 4365 for the Darwin Office or 8951 5023 for the Alice Springs Office.

