



Contact

Sustainable Hydropower Website
C/- Hydro Tasmania
4 Elizabeth St
Hobart TAS 7000
AUSTRALIA

sustainable.hydropower@hydro.com.au

Heritage

Cultural heritage impact assessments provide a means for new hydro projects to avoid alterations to sites of exceptional national and international heritage value.

Issue

In the absence of an adequate assessment, new hydropower schemes may end up submerging heritage sites and areas of cultural value. The construction of infrastructure, roads and power lines can also disturb or damage items with cultural significance. This may in cases result in the loss of, or damage to, sites with religious or ceremonial meaning for people.

Without sufficient involvement of relevant local and cultural groups, the values and risks for heritage issues may not be realised and adequately addressed.

Management

Strategic impact assessments can assist in determining areas or places known to be of heritage value that should be excluded from hydropower development. Many such sites are now protected by law and where feasible should be avoided. At a project level the identification of cultural heritage sites is a key component in the planning and environmental impact assessment process.

Under the guidance and direction of indigenous and local people, anthropologists, architects and archaeologists can undertake cultural heritage impact assessments. When sensitive sites or artefacts are identified, decisions can be made about their significance and appropriate steps taken to mitigate risk of damage or loss. As part of a comprehensive environmental impact assessment process, adequate time and budgetary allowances should be made for studies to be completed and mitigation measures undertaken.

If mitigation or avoidance is not possible, conservation efforts can be directed towards recovery of outstanding artefacts and relocation of them to appropriate protected areas as agreed with the communities involved and the authorities. Sensitive and appropriate management of cultural heritage can assist in increasing a community's acceptance of, and reducing opposition to, the construction of hydropower schemes. It can also facilitate social and cultural re-establishment and rehabilitation once the scheme is in operation.