

# ARCHAEOLOGY FACT SHEET

*Heritage Places Act 1993*



**Fact Sheet No. 3**

## What are significant objects?

The *Heritage Places Act 1993* (the Act) provides protections for objects that are of heritage significance. But what does this mean and how does it relate to archaeological sites?

Under the Act, **objects** are defined as:

*natural or manufactured objects including geological, palaeontological or speleological specimens, and archaeological artefacts.*

Archaeological artefacts are defined as:

*any matter forming part of an archaeological deposit, or any artefact, remains or material evidence associated with an archaeological deposit, that relates to the non-Aboriginal settlement of South Australia, or to an activity undertaken by a person as part of the exploration of South Australia, but does not include the remains of a ship or an article associated with a ship.*

This means that the term 'artefact', as defined by the Act, does not just mean the small, movable articles usually referred to as artefacts. It encompasses *all* archaeological features associated with an archaeological deposit, including, but not limited to, items such as building foundations, underground tanks, wells and cisterns, service utilities, infrastructure such as roads or bridges, or virtually any other human-made article.

However, the protections under the Act relate to whether an object is of heritage significance or not. But what does this mean?

## Significant objects

An object is of heritage significance if:

- it is an archaeological artefact, or any other form of artefact, that satisfies one or more of the significance criteria defined in the Act (the same as for a State Heritage Place – see below)



*Buried path leading down to the entrance of a former air raid shelter at the Daw Park Repatriation General Hospital (SHP 26305), excavated in 2007*



- it is a geological, palaeontological or speleological specimen that satisfies one or more of the significance criteria defined in the Act (see below)
- it is an object that is intrinsically related to the heritage significance of a State Heritage Place or a State Heritage Area.



Image courtesy: Flinders University

Engraved clay pipe stems excavated from a small dwelling in the Port Adelaide State Heritage Area (SHP 13252) in 2003

#### Did you know?

The *Heritage Places Act 1993* specifies that a place can be provisionally listed on the South Australian Heritage Register while an assessment of its significance is being conducted.

## How do you know objects on your land are significant?

While the Act protects significant objects from disturbance and destruction, in practice it can be difficult to tell whether a particular piece of land may contain significant objects, even if an archaeological site is obvious. Often, an archaeological assessment, such as an initial desktop assessment with historical research, an archaeological survey and possibly an archaeological test excavation will be able to determine the significance of a site or its deposits. Archaeologists are trained and experienced in assessing the significance levels of archaeological objects.

It is important to remember that sometimes even a benign archaeological site can yield significant artefacts that can help interpret the State's history.



Image courtesy: Flinders University

Archaeological survey using remote sensing techniques (magnetometry) at the site of the former Seven Stars Hotel at Redbanks

## Significance criteria for State Heritage Places and objects

A place is of heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

- it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history
- it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance
- it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history, including its natural history
- it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance
- it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics
- it has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it
- it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance.

(Section 16[1], *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

## What are not significant objects under the *Heritage Places Act 1993*?

The Act protects significant objects that relate to the European colonisation of South Australia. This excludes:

- archaeological objects that do not satisfy the significance criteria under section 16(1) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*
- Aboriginal objects within the meaning of the Aboriginal *Heritage Act 1988*. For further information on Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, visit Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet <https://www.dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/aboriginal-affairs-and-reconciliation/aboriginal-heritage>
- the remains of a ship or an article associated with a ship, which may be protected under the State's *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981*
- underwater cultural heritage outside the limits of the State, which may be protected by the Commonwealth's *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*.



*Sherds of ceramic moxhware excavated from an Adelaide CBD site in 2017*

### More information

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