

Consultation Notice

Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 (SA)

Establishing baseline data for the conservation of Koonalda Cave

The Project

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Minister), who is responsible for the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 (SA)* (Act), has received an application for authorisation under section 23 of the Act from the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to engage skilled practitioners to undertake digital recording, laser scanning, climate monitoring and water quality sampling activities inside Koonalda Cave.

Koonalda Cave is within the Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area, which is managed by DEW with advice from the Nullarbor Parks Advisory Committee (NPAC).

Consultation by DEW

The activities are supported by the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (FWCAC), the native title representative body for the area, and NPAC. Some representatives of the Mirning Community have expressed in-principle support for the nature and purpose of the activities, as an important part of plans to conserve and protect the values of the cave. However, they hold concerns regarding cultural protocols and consider that entering the cave and recording Aboriginal heritage features may amount to interference with Aboriginal heritage.

DEW considers these activities to be key to the ongoing conservation and preservation of Koonalda Cave and are aligned with the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Koonalda Cave that was finalised in early 2025. The CMP was developed in partnership with NPAC, with input from FWCAC, the Mirning Council of Elders and Far West Coast Aboriginal people.

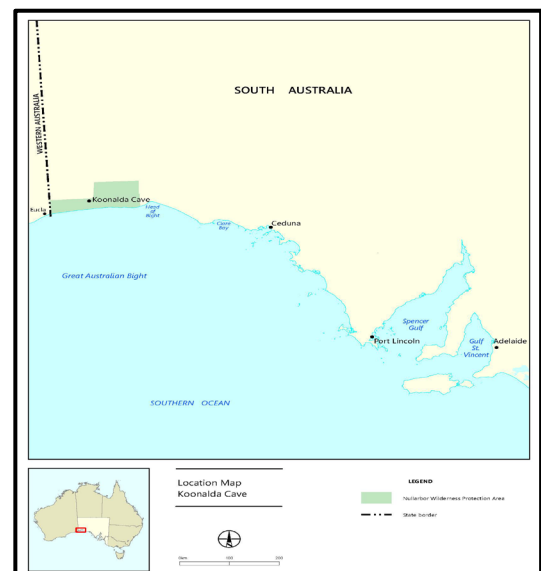
Aboriginal heritage

Koonalda Cave is an Aboriginal site of high significance to Mirning custodians and other Far West Coast Aboriginal people.

The site is a determined Aboriginal site under the Act and is recognised and protected under Commonwealth law for its outstanding heritage values to the nation.

Heritage Management

DEW states that it will continue to work in collaboration with Mirning Custodians as outlined in the CMP. The use and protection of Aboriginal cultural intellectual property will be managed through agreements with Mirning Custodians and FWCAC





Public Consultation Notice

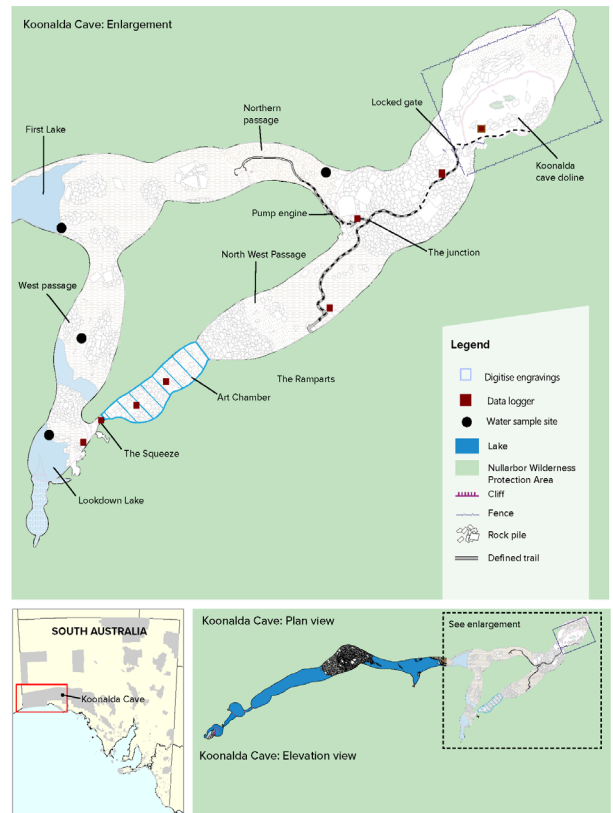
Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 (SA)

Purpose of consultation

Before considering whether to give an authorisation, the Minister must consult with Traditional Owners, interested Aboriginal parties, and the State Aboriginal Heritage Committee.

If granted, the authorisation will allow DEW, and others engaged by DEW, to conduct digital recording of engravings, laser scanning of cave passages, water sampling activities, and placement of data loggers inside the cave to monitor temperature and humidity. Some of these activities and areas are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Content courtesy: Maynard, R. 2010, *NK Koonalda Cave Survey* – 2000 ASF Grade 65A/55/02 – Digital Edition, Sydney University Speleological Society

Getting involved

If you are a Traditional Owner or an interested Aboriginal person or organisation, AAR wants to hear from you.

If you wish to learn more, lodge a submission and/or be notified of the Minister's decision in this matter, please contact AAR at:

Email: AAR.CIR@sa.gov.au

Phone: (08) 8363 8622

Contact: Joanne Fleer
Senior Project Officer (Heritage)
AAR
GPO Box 464
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Please share this information with other Traditional Owners and interested Aboriginal people.

Consultation closes 5 July 2025

Questions to consider

1. Should the authorisation sought be granted to the DEW? Why or why not?
2. If granted, what conditions (if any) should be put on it?
3. Will the Project provide you with direct or indirect benefits (cultural, financial, personal)?
4. What should the Minister consider when deciding this application?

Further information

AAR has prepared a detailed Consultation Information Pack, which is available at agd.sa.gov.au/heritage-applications together with a copy of the CMP.

If you would like to receive further information, via email or mail, please let AAR know. AAR is happy to arrange meeting/s with interested Aboriginal parties to discuss.