



# A SURVEY FOR ABORIGINAL SITES IN THE CUNDELEE MINIGWAL AREA

COMMISSIONED BY PNC EXPLORATION (AUSTRALIA) PTY LTD

AUGUST 1, 1982

*ROBERT McKEICH, PhD, BA, Assoc. Dip. Soc. Sci.*

*Location: on Maps SH 51-11 and SH 51-7, Edition 1 Series R502*

*29°30'S to 30°23'S 62.5 to 22.2*

*123°07'E to 124°17'E 25.5 to 34.2*



## AIMS

1. To make an ethnographic enquiry into the possibility of Aboriginal claims to vested rights and interests in the area north of Cundeelee and south-east of Mt Margaret within which PNC Exploration (Australia) Pty. Ltd. is working.
2. To ascertain whether such rights and interests are covered by the Western Australia ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ACT 1972-1980.
3. To record the location of such sites and to make appropriate recommendations.

## CUNDEELEE

Refer to INTERIM REPORT following a visit to Cundeelee, April, 1982 from which the following extracts have been taken.

"Four separate consultations were held at the Cundeelee Aboriginal camp with several elders present on each occasion. Altogether twelve elders were directly consulted but some of these elders also discussed the issues with others not present at the time and reported back at subsequent meetings. Maps of the locality were studied and understood by those present. In addition, sand maps were also drawn. Conversations took place in both Aboriginal and English languages. To ensure that secret-sacred information was not withheld, only men were present during the discussions. The researcher having been initiated into "manhood" within the tribe is certain that a frank open talk took place without reservations.

A consensus agreed to the following:

- (a) No one now living at Cundeelee "belongs to" the "country" under survey.
- (b) No one now living at Cundeelee has been into the target area.
- (c) To their knowledge all the people for whom the target area may have had significance have died.
- (d) There is no way in which the Cundeelee people, or any other Aboriginal group would be able to "take over" the land because the mythology, rituals and ceremonies have been "lost" with the death of the original owners.
- (e) No extant Aboriginal groups have any economic, political or religious claims upon the specified area although the people from Mt Margaret or some others may have an interest in the northwest section.
- (f) There is a strong likelihood that archaeological sites are located within the area. These would include old camps, burial grounds and sacred religious sites. This is speculation as no firm evidence of any kind was presented apart from the statement that people used to live there.

It must be pointed out that the above findings are based entirely upon the reported attitudes and behaviour of the people now resident at Cundeelee. Their own economic, political and religious affiliations lie further east than the target area, north of Rawlinna and Loongana. Although mining exploration is proceeding only 100-200 kilometres north of Cundeelee, these people seem little concerned about it."

## MOUNT MARGARET

Three Aboriginal men were interviewed at Menzies on July 8, 1982. None of them have had any association with the target area and knew of no-one who had any interests there.

At the Mt Margaret community several Aboriginal men were interviewed separately on July 8, 9, and 10 none indicating any particular interest in or associations with the exploration area.

A private meeting with a group of seven elders discussed the location in both the Aboriginal dialect and in English. Some commented that years ago Aborigines walked southward in the general direction of the exploration location but they could give no specific details, nor could they indicate the exact routes taken. Finally, there was agreement that the area had no present significance and there were no specific mythological sacred or camping sites of which they were aware.

In other words the findings for Cundeelee also apply to the Mt Margaret people.

## CONCLUSION

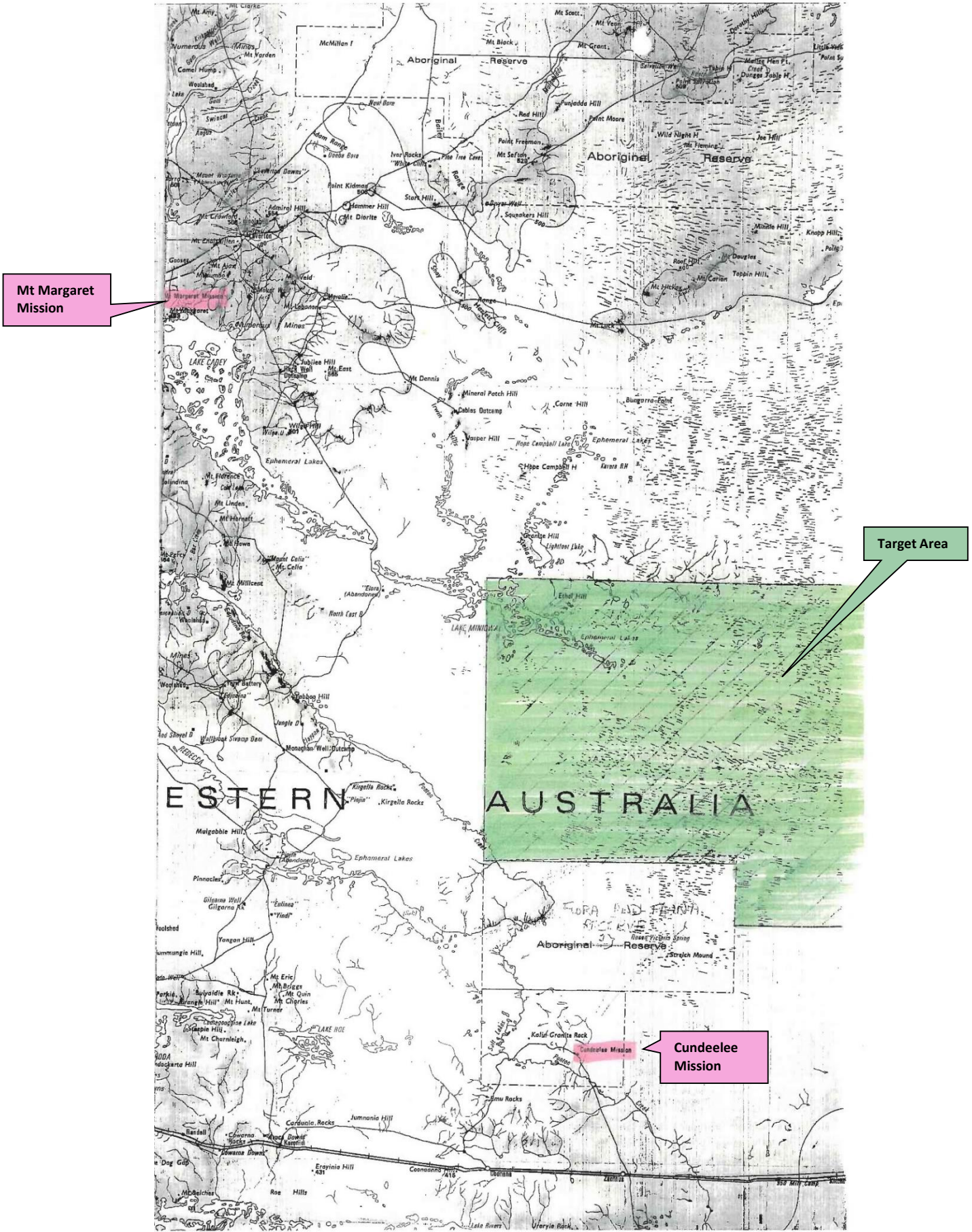
It appears as if the Aborigines at present residing in the settlements in close proximity to the exploration area do not have in that location any current sites of significance as defined in the ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ACT, 1972-1980.

There are hints that Aborigines may have lived or ranged there in the past but no details of this were given during the lengthy and at depth discussions. Archaeological research would be necessary to confirm this.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is a true and faithful account of the investigation and findings of the author and is based upon information freely communicated by qualified Aboriginal elders. There is a minimal likelihood that other living Aborigines may have interests in the exploration area.

I acknowledge the integrity and generous assistance of PNC Exploration Pty Ltd in commissioning this survey, and cannot speak too highly of the willing cooperation of the Aboriginal people of Cundeelee, Mt Margaret and elsewhere who shared their knowledge.



Tags added by Vimy Resources