

**A  
Report  
of an  
Aboriginal Heritage Value Assessment  
of a  
Proposed Wood  
Processing Plant  
off the  
Weld Road  
Southern Forests**

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## **1.0 General Information**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This report describes both the methods used and the results of an Aboriginal heritage values assessment and was produced as part of the consultation process involved in the building of wood veneer plant west of Judbury.

Its purpose is to assess and document any Aboriginal heritage issues in the area where construction is to occur and to also give advice on these issues. The survey was undertaken for John Holland. The survey was conducted after both the South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corp (SETAC) and the Aboriginal Heritage Section of the Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts requested that an Aboriginal heritage survey be completed prior to the commencement of any ground disturbance work involved in the construction of the plant.

The Aboriginal heritage survey was completed by Leigh Maynard, consulting Aboriginal Heritage Officer, on 23 & 24 April 2003 to ensure that:

- any ground disturbance work involved with the plant does not interfere with, destroy or damage any Aboriginal heritage site.
- no concealment of any Aboriginal heritage site will take place during any work associated with the construction of the plant.
- if concealment of, destruction of, damage to or interference of an Aboriginal site is to occur then to inform John Holland Pty Ltd, of the necessary permits under the Aboriginal Relics Act 1975, prior to the commencement of any ground disturbance work.
- the protection of all the Aboriginal communities interests concerning Aboriginal heritage are taken into account throughout construction of the plant.
- the protection of any Aboriginal landscape values identified within the study area occurs.
- the views of the Aboriginal community are taken into account by consulting with the SETAC and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council as the Aboriginal heritage representatives for the Aboriginal community in this matter.

### **1.2 Study Area**

The survey area is located within a broader region known to contain a number and diversity of Aboriginal heritage sites with strong past Aboriginal landscape values, both of which are important to the Aboriginal community. (See figure 1)

The Huon Valley area has numerous Aboriginal heritage sites recorded on its banks and further inland. These sites show that the area was visited regularly

over a long time frame. The main reason for the visitation to the Huon Valley was the stone resources in the area, which were well utilised in the past. This fact is borne out by the numerous waste flakes that occur along the banks of the Huon River and areas further inland. These waste flakes are the by-products of tool manufacture from the local stone, chalcedony and chert.

In the case of this survey the landscape values have been compromised or damaged in the past by logging, the larger native vegetation has been removed with an insufficient time frame for this vegetation to recover. This has left a smaller forest than normal in the location of the proposed plant, which has affected the fauna of the area. The possum would not be as prolific as they once were. Also the study area had a large button grass plain extending through the location of the proposed plant, which would limit the potential for identifying Aboriginal sites.

It is known that many of the plants that grow in this area were utilised by Aboriginal people in the past and for this reason it can be stated with some certainty that the survey area had an Aboriginal landscape in the past. The best description of what an Aboriginal landscape is a landscape that was influenced by the presence of Aboriginal people, that is to say Aboriginal people either through selecting to use one plant above another or through burning influenced the botanical make-up of the landscape.

It is known that button grass plains depended upon Aboriginal people to maintain them with the use of fire. Without burning, button grass will die and the surrounding plant species will encroach on the button grass habitat eventually taking over. Fire would keep the encroachment of surrounding plants in check allowing a strong and young button grass plain to thrive.

### **1.3 Methodology**

Initially a desktop study was completed prior to the commencement of any fieldwork. This was to determine if the area had been surveyed previously. If ground surveys had been completed previously then the size and type of Aboriginal heritage sites were recorded and noted for use in the field component of the survey.

The field survey component of the study was completed by myself on 23 and 24 April 2003. This was done by walking the section of the study area where the main components of the plant were to be constructed and the proposed fence-line around the plant.

## **1.4 Constraints of Survey**

The major constraint to a complete survey was thickness of the vegetation, which limited the ground visibility. This restricted the ground survey to those areas that have had previous disturbances and which allowed ground visibility. These areas were vehicle tracks, survey tracks and clearing for the proposed fence-line.

## **2.0 Management Information**

### **2.1 Land Use Description**

The survey areas lies in what used to be the country of the Mou.he.neen.ner people, whose country extended from the Huon River to the west, north as far as the upper reaches of the Huon River and present day Melton Mowbray and to the east by the Derwent River. This area included Bruny Island, which was visited seasonally, mostly during the muttonbird and sealing seasons.

The original landscapes of the study areas, in the time that the Mou.he.neen.ner people lived here, are very different to what it is today. The original landscape has been changed by the removal of the dominant vegetation of the landscape, the eucalypts, in the past. The landscape was once thick dry sclerophyll forest dominated by eucalypts, a great variety of mid storey plants with an understorey mainly of saggs and native grasses, with a swampy area dominated by button grass. This landscape, though appearing static was being influenced by the Mou.he.neen.ner people and as such was identified as Aboriginal landscape.

The presence of the Mou.he.neen.ner people in the landscape altered the make-up of the ecosystem; they were the dominant players in the environment. By eating certain plants, which they preferred, altered the numbers of that plant and allowed other plants, which were competition with the desired plant, to invade the footholds of the desired plant. Further to this the continual burning of the vegetation also changed the landscape, the burning allowed those plants which could tolerate fire to thrive. The selective burning also induced growth in those plants that the Mou.he.neen.ner people wanted to grow, ie native grasses were burnt because the regrowth was beneficial to the macropods of a given area, which in turn increased their numbers, making for a more successful hunt. It is mistakenly said that the landscape can be restored to its original state. This is incorrect for the landscape was originally an Aboriginal landscape as maintained by the Mou.he.neen.ner people. With the removal of the Mou.he.neen.ner people from the ecosystem of the area the original Aboriginal landscape has been changed and will never be restored.

The landscape provided the Mou.he.neen.ner people with their favoured animal food the macropods and possums, these were the larger protein sources for them.

The macropods were hunted solely by the men of the Mou.he.neen.ner, this was done with tea tree spears which had been straightened and hardened in a fire, these spears were short compared to mainland tribes being some 7-8 foot long. The women captured the possum, they done this by climbing a tree that was known to contain a possum, usually identified by scratch marks on the bark of the tree. Notches cut into the tree with stone hand axes, as foot holes aided the women, and with a grass rope tied around their feet they were able to scale the tallest of trees. Once located the animal was flushed from its daytime hole and harassed until it attempted to flee to another tree, but upon it reaching the ground it was quickly dispatched by other women waiting below. Wombat, echidna and smaller marsupials, native mice and rats supplemented these main stays.

The diversity of the landscape supplied the Mou.he.neen.ner people with several fruiting understorey shrubs and a number of tuberous plants. These combined with the fauna meant the Mou.he.neen.ner people eat a varied and rich diet.

This landscape changed with the advent of Europeans, and the change has been a major one, the former dominate player in the old ecosystem, the Mou.he.neen.ner people, have been removed, changing the landscape forever.

## **2.2 Findings**

The completion of the desktop study showed that no Aboriginal; heritage sites have been identified within the study area. This was due to there having been no Aboriginal heritage survey conducted in this area in the past.

There was one site identified during the ground survey phase of the study. This site was an isolated chalcedony artefact. The artefact was a waste flake from the reduction process in the making of stone tools. The Huon Valley has rich sources of Chalcedony so the stone was most likely local.

The study area was identified to have minimal Aboriginal heritage values in regards to resources that were utilised by Aboriginal people in the past. This is despite there being some resources present mostly plants that were eaten and used for the making of tools. Further to the plants there is significant numbers of fauna that would have been hunted for food at this location. But these resources are renewable and would not be a consideration in determining if the past Aboriginal landscape values of the study area would be affected by the development of the wood processing plant. Also given that the landscape has been severely degraded by past impacts and the original Aboriginal landscape has been lost and can never be restored then the Aboriginal landscape values in the study area are extremely minimal.

The presence of the one isolated artefact shows that Aboriginal people visited the area in the past. The time frame of these visitations can not be determined but the most likely reason for the visitation was for hunting or food gathering.

## **2.3 Site Impacts**

The study area has been heavily impacted upon in the past by human means. The most identifiable impact the construction of roads throughout the study area. These tracks were associated with the forestry industry. The construction of the plant will be a major impact upon the landscape of the area, which has been identified to have minimal Aboriginal heritage values due to the large number of past impacts that have occurred.

In regards to the Aboriginal heritage site TASI 9282 that was identified during the ground survey, the construction of the plant and the installation of infrastructure associated with the plant will no impact upon this site.

## **2.4 Statement of Significance**

All Aboriginal relics and artefacts are considered to be significant by the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and all Aboriginal sites are protected under the *Aboriginal Relics Act 1975*. The Act states that it is illegal to destroy, damage, deface, conceal or otherwise interfere with an Aboriginal relic. There is provision within the Act for these actions mentioned above to occur. The process involves seeking written authorisation from the Minister of the DPIWE for a permit to either to destroy, damage, deface, conceal or otherwise interfere with an Aboriginal relic or a combination there of.

## **3.0 Recommendations**

The results of the ground survey showed that there was one identified Aboriginal heritage site within the study area. This site was an isolated artefact, TASI 9282.

The location of the site is not within a development area and should not be impacted upon. For this reason it is recommended that the works can proceed from an Aboriginal heritage perspective as the location of the proposed plant has no significant Aboriginal landscape values and no Aboriginal heritage sites within the development areas.

For the above reason it is recommended that the development go ahead without any hindrance in regards to Aboriginal heritage issues.

If any further information is needed then contact Leigh Maynard on either (03) 6233 6281, (03) 6273 5993 or 0413 521 394.

## **4.0 Bibliography**

Aboriginal Relics Act 1975

The Tasmanian Tribes, Cicatrices as Tribal Indicators Among the Tasmanian Aborigines, N.J.B. Plomley, Occasional Paper No 5, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Tasmania

Figure1: Map showing approximate location and size of the study area

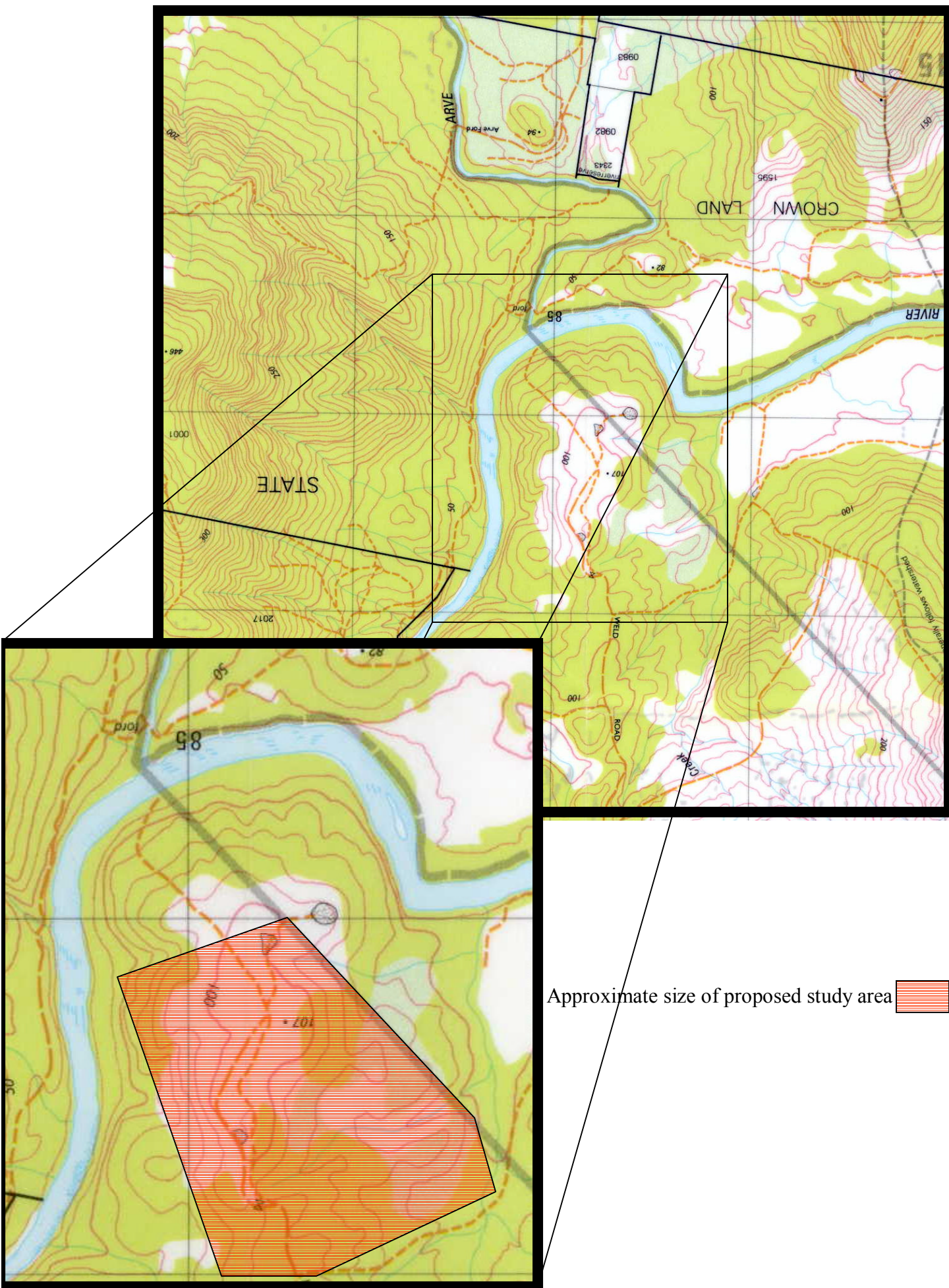
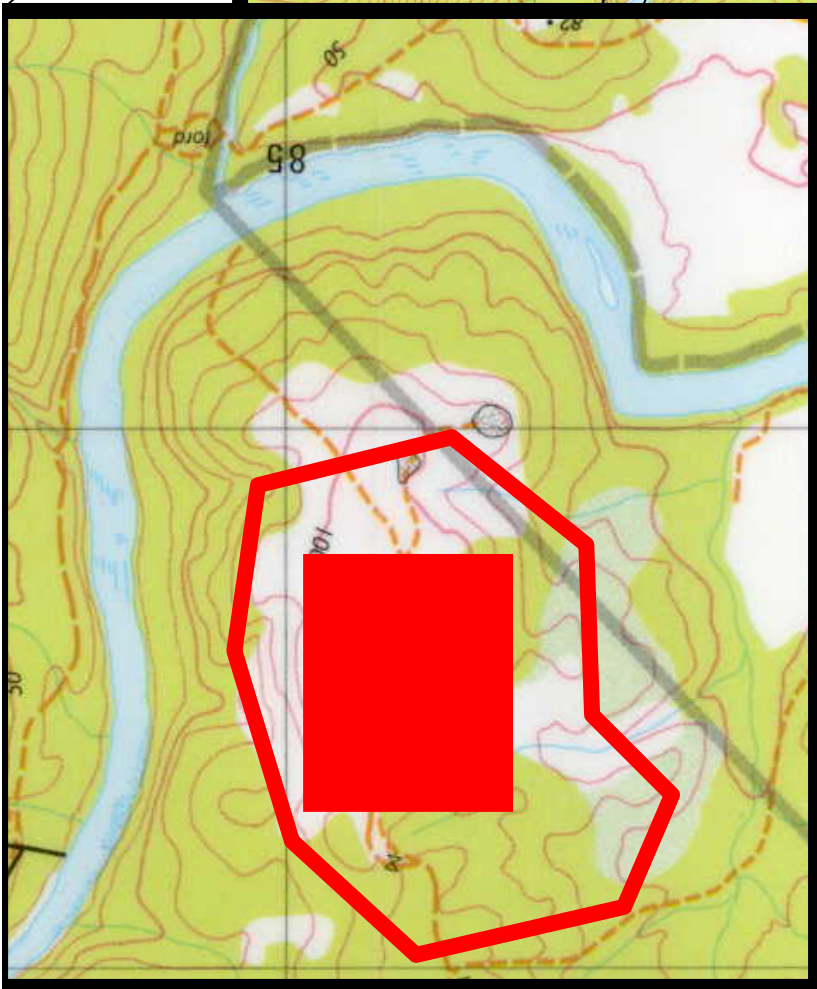


Figure 2: Map showing approximate area covered during ground survey




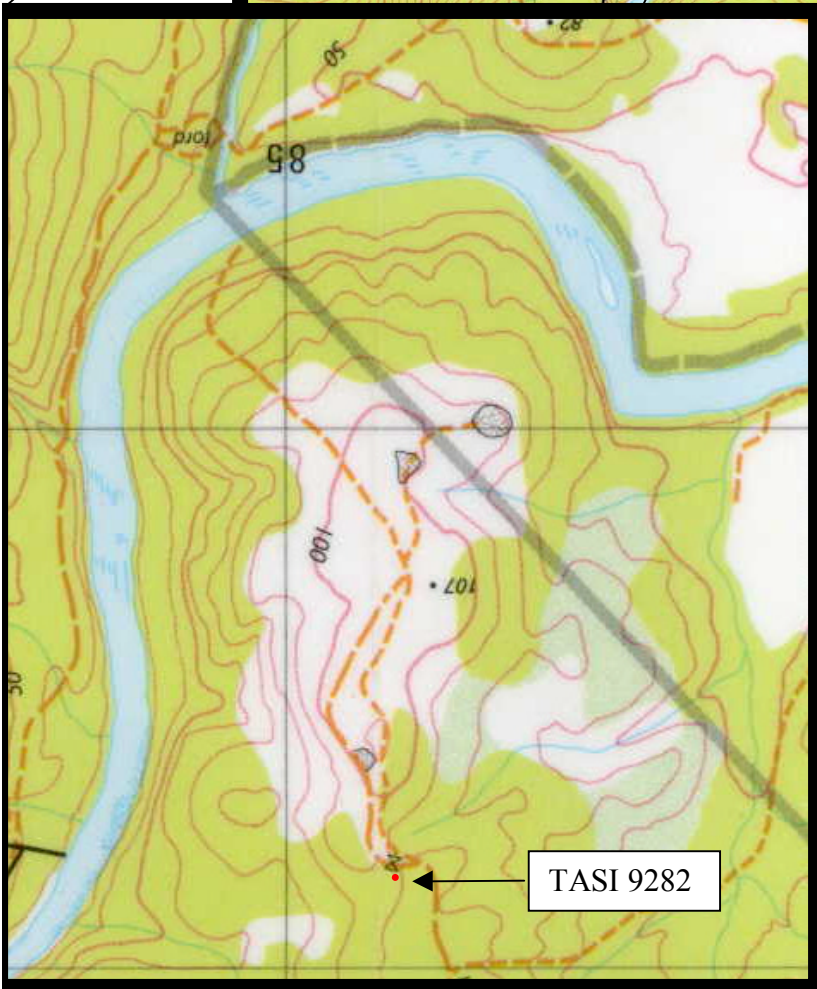
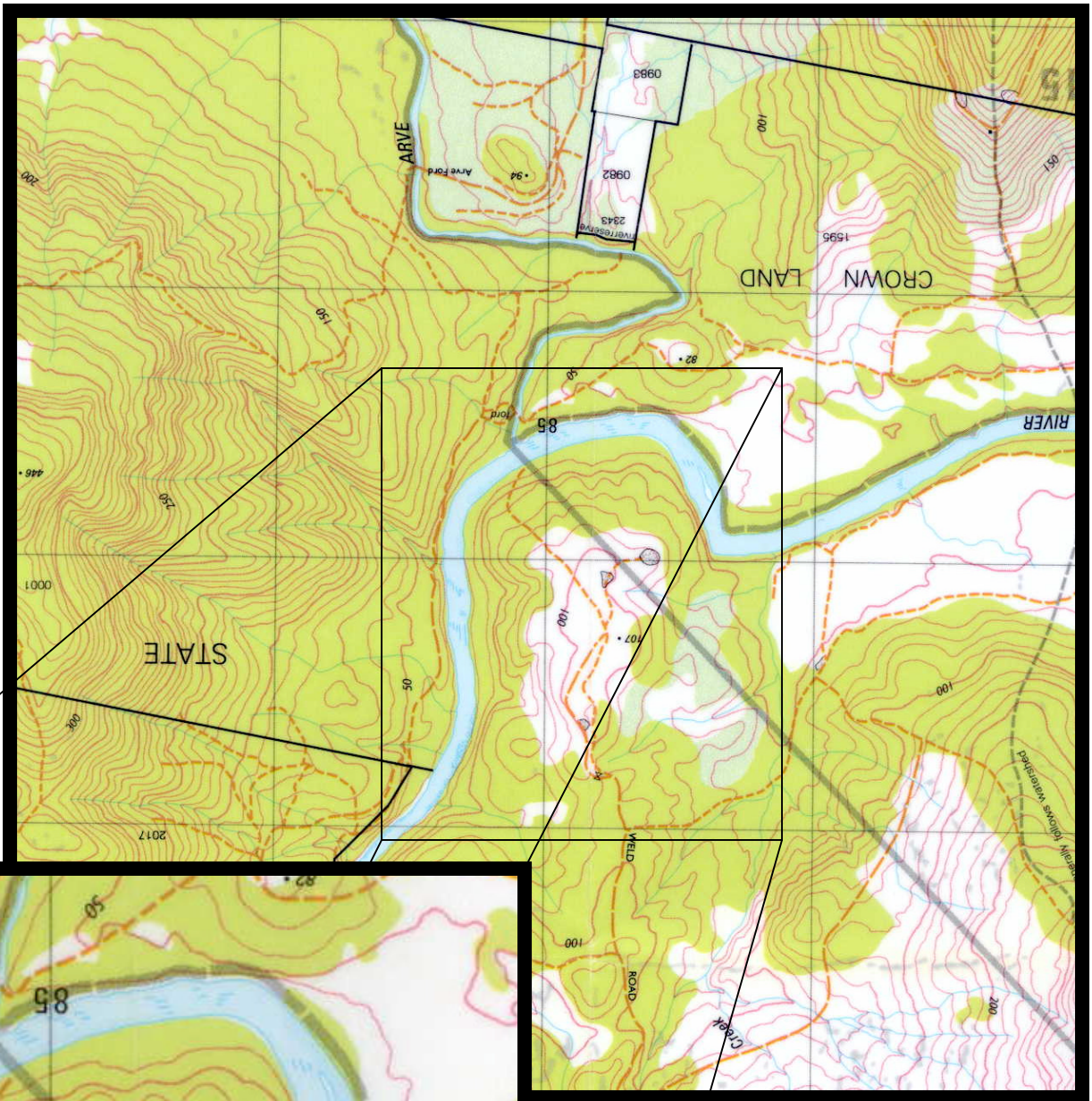
Approximate area of survey 

Figure 3: Map showing approximate location TASI 9282



Approximate location of TASI 9282 •