

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect) Notice 2015

Notifiable Instrument NI2015—253

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s40 Notice of decision about registration

1 Revocation

This instrument replaces NI2015—66.

2 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect) Notice 2015*.

3 Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at [Attachment A](#): Register entry for the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect.

4 Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at [Attachment A](#).

5 Date of registration

4 June 2015

Pamela Hubert
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
4 June 2015



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
HERITAGE REGISTER
(Registration)**

For the purposes of s. 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves

(part) Block 3, Section 1, Denman Prospect

DATE OF REGISTRATION

4 June 2015 Notifiable Instrument: 2015–

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at ACT Heritage. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Telephone 13 22 81

This statement refers to the location of the place as required in s. 12 (b) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

LOCATION OF THE PLACE

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect (part) Block 3, Section 1.

Grid Reference declared Restricted Information by the ACT Heritage Council under s. 54 (1) of the *Heritage Act*

This section refers to the description of the place as required in s.12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

Aboriginal Grinding Grooves (previously known as 'MV18') consisting of the following attributes:

- Sandstone outcrop, including the four grinding grooves, with a boundary of 20 metres diameter.
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This statement refers to the heritage significance of the place as required in s.12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves are important evidence of Aboriginal cultural history of the ACT as they provide insight into past tradition and way of life by showing that Aboriginal people were at the site grinding material that was crucial in accessing resources from the surrounding region. They relate to the artefact grinding process, water access and utilisation of a limited stone resource, and hold strong cultural association for the Aboriginal community. The production of ground-edge stone axes in the region grew in importance in the last few thousand years and marked the last major technological change in Aboriginal material culture before European influence [*criterion (a) and (g)*].

Grinding grooves represent an important part of past Aboriginal life: the creation of ground-edge stone technology. Surviving evidence for this type of technology is rare in the ACT. The ground-edge stone axe was an indispensable part of Aboriginal peoples' toolkit and wooden digging sticks with fire-hardened ends were also sharpened in artefact grinding grooves. These artefacts were of great importance to Aboriginal people by enabling the exploitation of a wide variety of food resources. The depth and quantity of the artefact grinding grooves reflects continual use involving many visits to the sites. The frequency of grinding groove sites in the ACT is low, and fewer still offer the same interpretive opportunities, lending further rarity to the place. The place is rare among this type of site as it is the only one that is located along the Molonglo River, which acted as an Aboriginal pathway from the junction of the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers across the Limestone Plains towards the alpine region. Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, are also rare among grinding sites as they are located 150m away from the nearest creek, whereas most grinding sites in the region and Australia occur within or immediately adjacent to waterways. It is likely the grooves extend beneath the shallowly buried sandstone shelf, and will contribute important information on Aboriginal grinding technologies, particularly in lowland contexts [*criteria (b) and (c)*].

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage on 13 22 81.

REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves have been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against criteria [(a), (b), (c), and (g)] under s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the nomination for the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- information provided by a site inspection on 31 July 2013 by ACT Heritage; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Aboriginal Grinding Grooves*, June 2015, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity.

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, meets this criterion.

Grinding grooves are important evidence of Aboriginal cultural history of the ACT as they provide a rare unequivocal glimpse into past tradition and way of life by showing that Aboriginal people were at the sites grinding material that was crucial in accessing resources from the surrounding region. They relate to the artefact grinding process, water access and utilisation of a limited stone resource. The production of ground-edge stone axes in the region grew in importance in the last few thousand years and marked the last major technological change in Aboriginal material culture before European influence.

(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, meets this criterion.

Grinding grooves represent an important part of past Aboriginal life: the creation of ground-edge stone technology, Surviving evidence for this type of technology is rare in the ACT. Stone grinding

technology was used by past Aboriginal people for many different purposes. Ethnographic, microscopic and residue analysis has shown that grinding technology has been used to shape objects such as stone, bone and wood; process foodstuffs such as seeds, nuts and moths; and to process ochre for use as a pigment. Based on previous research, it is most likely that the thin grooves found at the place are associated with the shaping of ground edge artefacts such as axes. The ground-edge stone axe was an indispensable part of the Aboriginal hunter-gatherer toolkit and would have been used for stripping bark off trees to make baskets, shields and other items. Wooden digging sticks with fire-hardened ends were also sharpened in artefact grinding grooves. Digging sticks were used to procure roots and tubers for food. These artefacts were of great importance to Aboriginal people by enabling the exploitation of a wide variety of food resources. The depth and quantity of the artefact grinding grooves reflects continual use involving many visits to the sites.

The frequency of grinding groove sites in the ACT is low, and fewer still offer the same interpretive opportunities, lending further rarity to the place. Not including the Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, there are thirteen previously recorded Aboriginal grinding groove sites included in the ACT Heritage Register. Of these, three are located in the lowlands, now suburban, areas of the ACT with the rest located in the alpine areas to the south and southwest of the region. The lowland grinding sites are located in Nicholls in the north and Theodore to the south with the Grinding Grooves, Molonglo Valley located in-between. The place is rare among this type of site as it is the only one that is located along the Molonglo River, which acted as an Aboriginal pathway from the junction of the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers across the Limestone Plains towards the alpine region. Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, and the other two lowland grinding sites, are also rare among grinding sites as they are located 150m away from the nearest creek, whereas most grinding sites in the region and Australia occur within or immediately adjacent to waterways.

(c) potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, meets this criterion.

The grooves lie on a sandstone outcrop, which is part of a greater rock mass which extends for at least ten metres in an east-west direction, and up to four metres in a north-south direction, and is covered by only a thin layer of gravelly soil up to sixty centimetres deep. There is suspected physical evidence for additional grinding activities beneath this layer of soil, which will contribute to an understanding of rare lowland Aboriginal grinding and tool technology in the ACT.

(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, does not meet this criterion.

While the site provides an example of grinding grooves in a lowland context in the ACT, it is not important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of its class. This is owing to evident deterioration of the sandstones outcrop, and the existence of better preserved and more extensive examples elsewhere, such as Theodore.

(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, does not meet this criterion.

While all Aboriginal sites are valued by the Aboriginal community in the ACT and surrounds, the place does not demonstrate the aesthetic characteristics of a grinding grooves site beyond the ordinary, due to significant weathering of the sandstone shelf over time. Further, while the Aboriginal community values the place for its association with ancestral connection and a traditional way of life no longer practised, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the place is valued for its aesthetic qualities.

(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, does not meet this criterion.

The place does not demonstrate a creative or technical achievement beyond the ordinary, for the period in which it was created. Further, the grooves do not demonstrate a high degree of integrity, having been subject to significant weathering over time.

(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, meets this criterion.

All Aboriginal heritage is considered significant by the Aboriginal community. However, grinding groove sites have special significance as they provide a rare unequivocal glimpse into past activities by showing that Aboriginal people were at this site grinding material that was important for accessing resources from the surrounding region. Cultural workshops held with the Aboriginal community and ACT Government in 2012 revealed that the place holds strong cultural importance for the Aboriginal community, owing to its association with their traditional way of life and the past cultural landscape of the Molonglo Valley. Its importance in this regard is beyond the ordinary due to the rarity of the place within the context of the future urban area of the Molonglo Valley.

(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.

Molonglo Valley Grinding Grooves, Denman Prospect, does not meet this criterion.

While the place provides important evidence into past Aboriginal lifeways in the ACT, it does not hold a special association highlighting the achievements with the life of an Aboriginal person, or people, beyond the ordinary, differentiating it from other grinding groove site in the ACT.

SITE PLAN

**RESTRICTED INFORMATION
DECLARED BY THE ACT HERITAGE COUNCIL
UNDER SECTION 54 (1) OF THE *HERITAGE ACT 2004***