

**Girrawah Park
Stone Procurement Site,
Gamburra Street, Ngunnawal, ACT
Visitors Guide**

**Canberra Archaeological Society
and Aboriginal Archaeologists Australia**

for the National Trust of Australia (ACT)

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Visitors Guide to Girrawah Park

Girrawah Park (the name comes from the local language word for 'goanna') is a significant cultural site which involved many people working hard to ensure recognition and protection. It was the first big project undertaken between the Aboriginal representatives of Canberra and a major developer. The site was protected under the

Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991 and ACT officers assisted with the enforcement of the law and subsequent negotiations between all interested parties.

The Aboriginal people of this area used stone of various types to make implements to use in finding food, preparing meat and vegetables for cooking and to help make tools, weapons, clothing and utensils from wood, bark and plant fibres.

One stone source called 'chert' or 'metamorphosed tuff' is a very hard volcanic rock. A reef of this stone runs under Gungahlin, coming to the surface at several places where evidence of Aboriginal people chipping off pieces to work into implements is found.

One of these Aboriginal 'quarries' is in Girrawah Park and another one at Mulligans Flat.



Metamorphosed tuff at Girrawah Park

As this stone is so hard, it would not have been easy to remove pieces to work with.

Please don't remove any stone from this significant heritage site or any others that you visit!

Aboriginal people across Australia knew how to heat the rocks by building fires close to them and then cooling them quickly by pouring on water, making smaller pieces crack off.

As well as quarrying the stone near Girrawah Park, the Aboriginal people camped nearby for thousands of years, cooking and eating, making new implements and mending old ones. They shared their very rich culture of laws and information about travel and resources, and enjoyed entertainment through dance and song.

Their descendants live nearby, enjoying the richness of their culture. They worked together to design and decorate this Park. If you want to find out more about them, please visit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre at Yarramundi Reach.



The Girrawah play sculpture

This stone procurement site in Gungahlin was first recorded in 1990 during a survey of the proposed major roads of the new town development.

The stone type was originally described as *chert*, but there have been several studies on this type of stone in the ACT and it may now be classified as *metamorphic tuff*, but whatever the terminology, it is a very hard stone used by local Aboriginal people to make artefacts. This stone forms a reef that runs through Gungahlin, outcropping just across Gungahlin Drive in Nicholls and at Mulligans Flat.

Both these sites were listed on the ACT Heritage Register with a requirement not to disturb the ground surface. These areas were to become the suburbs of Gungahlin and were sold to individual developers or offered as joint ventures. Unfortunately this site was inadvertently damaged during the early construction of Ngunnawal streets.

Officers from the ACT Heritage Unit worked with the developer and the Ngunnawal representatives, who decided that as actual damage to the site had been minimal, the best outcome was to conserve and promote the site. It was also agreed that the developers would erect a playground and art works on the site so that all children and families could enjoy the area and it would help them to understand something of Aboriginal culture in this area.

The Ngunnawal people designed the playground, the climbing statue of a goanna (called Girrawah in the Ngunnawal language) and a wall with a mural. Locally indigenous plants were to be used in the landscape design of the park.



One outcome of the disturbance to PH13 was a talk by the ACT Heritage Unit officer to workmen in the new suburbs of Gungahlin.

In 2007 CAS received an ACT Heritage Grant through the National Trust (ACT) to work with the Registered Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs) to place a sign on the Park. Dave Johnston undertook the consultation with the four organisations to confirm the text and graphics for the sign. The National Trust obtained funds to place a similar sign at the other occurrence of this chert reef and procurement site at Mulligans Flat. All organisations agreed to the wording with minor changes.

They were also very pleased that signs were to go on these sites as reminders to all visitors of the past and present Aboriginal inhabitants of this area of the ACT. They are keen to see more such signs on sites in the ACT.