

Information sheet

Unexploded ordnance (UXO)

Area management advice for land potentially affected by UXO— Western Downs

This information sheet constitutes a generic area management advice issued by the Department of Environment and Science for affected land in the Western Downs Regional Council area.

Background

The Department of Defence has provided information to the Department of Environment and Science (DES) about unexploded ordnances (UXOs) found on land associated with a former World War II ammunition depot located near Columboola. UXO unearthed at the site were found to contain a chemical known as mustard agent, which represents a toxic hazard for the skin and lungs and is persistent in the environment. Similar munitions in the area may also contain the incendiary compound 'white phosphorus', and/or explosives.

In 2012 the Department of Defence conducted a site investigation and remediation works for UXO at the former ammunition depot. During those remediation works the land to which this area management advice applies (being a rail siding area that served the depot) was identified as posing a similar level of risk from the presence of UXO to the remediated works depot site.

Area management advice

Any development application for reconfiguration or material change of use of any lot to which this AMA applies will require referral to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP) as a concurrence agency under Schedule 10, Part 4, Division 2, Table 1 of the Planning Regulation 2017:

Development application for the following development, if all or part of the premises are shown as an area of substantial unexploded ordnance potential in a mapping layer in the development assessment mapping system published on the department's website¹—

- (a) reconfiguring a lot that is assessable development under section 20;
- (b) a material change of use that is assessable development under a local categorising instrument

DSDILGP is the State representative for the planning and development process. The Department of Environment and Science can provide advice on what land is potentially impacted by UXO through the register (fees apply—see <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/pollution/management/contaminated-land/search-registers/>). The register is updated for subdivision and should pick up sub-divided parcels that the AMA applies to.

UXO is explosive ordnance such as artillery shells, mortars or grenades that did not explode when used. Much of the UXO in Queensland is due to military training during World War II.

¹ This is a reference to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning's website - www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au.

Area management advice for land potentially effected by UXO

This document constitutes the AMA given for all land being an adjunct on the environmental management register (EMR) within Columboola, in the Western Downs Regional Council area and extends to any road and railway reserves adjoining these allotments. This AMA is to be considered where development applications are submitted, under the [Planning Act 2016](#), for the reconfiguration of a lot or for a material change of use.

The purpose of this advice is to assist in the protection of human health and the environment whilst managing UXO issues during land disturbance associated with land development activities.

The AMA does not:

- apply to specific lots within affected areas that have otherwise been determined to be unaffected via investigative/remedial processes recognised by DES; or
- constitute a listing of affected lot/s on the environmental management register (EMR) or contaminated land register (CLR) that are maintained by DES pursuant to the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

Any development application for reconfiguration or material change of use of any lot to which this AMA applies will require referral to the DSDILGP as a concurrence agency under Schedule 10, Part 6 of the Planning Regulation 2017.

This AMA is to alert the relevant local government that the subject land under its jurisdiction has been deemed to have a 'substantial' potential to be affected by residual UXO and any works including excavations in the area must not be carried out without proper assessment and advice by an UXO investigation and remediation contractor or consultant.

In areas deemed to have substantial risk, it is recommended that excavation works do not take place without proper assessment and management. Further, any land usage rezoning or development of this land should only proceed following the conduct of suitable UXO investigations and completion of any necessary remediation by an UXO investigation and remediation contractor or consultant. For a list of UXO investigation and remediation contractors or consultants who are able to carry out this work, please refer to the Department of Defence [website](#).

Notwithstanding the above requirement, the current usage of land with a 'substantial'² UXO potential may continue without specific need for further UXO investigation. The Department of Defence advises that there are no known instances, in Australia, where UXO have caused injuries unless they were deliberately and intentionally disturbed.

The procedure, if an object suspected of being UXO is found anywhere, is as follows:

- Do not touch or disturb the object.
- Take action, where appropriate, to prevent it being disturbed by another person.
- Note its approximate dimensions and general appearance.
- Note the route to its location.

² Where the Department of Defence has categorised sites, assessments of residual UXO potential refer to substantial, slight or other levels where:

- sites categorised as being substantial will have a history of numerous UXO finds or heavy residual fragmentation
- areas categorised as slight will have a confirmed history of military activities that have resulted in residual UXO but which Defence considers it inappropriate to assess as substantial
- areas categorised as other, have a confirmed history of military training but records do not confirm that the site was used for live firing. UXO or explosive ordnance fragments / components have not been recovered from the site. Defence opinion is that it would be inappropriate to assess as either slight or substantial.

- Advise the Police as soon as possible.

Disclaimer:

While this information sheet has been prepared with care it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Science should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

Approved:

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