

AUSTRALIA

This report builds on the previous Australian Committee report in ICOMOS *Heritage at Risk 2001/2002*, with a particular focus on 20th-century heritage places at risk.

Introduction

Australia has three levels of government, comprising Commonwealth, State/Territory and local authorities. Each level of government provides some form of statutory control over heritage places.

Heritage place conservation legislation was introduced at a Commonwealth level and in all States and Territories from the 1970s to the 1990s, but it is not uniform in type, provisions or use. The process of reviewing heritage place conservation legislation has occurred, or is currently underway, both at a Commonwealth and State level. The source of authority for heritage legislation varies across the country, and includes government ministers, State agencies and statutory authorities such as Heritage Councils.

Since the 1980s, some local authorities have begun addressing heritage place conservation through local planning schemes, but again this approach is not uniform in type, provision or use, nor does it apply to all local authorities.

A national Environment Protection and Heritage Council has been recently established and has identified key issues to be addressed, one of which is pursuing a national approach to heritage place conservation and establishing integrated national heritage policy. The key issues mirror the findings from the Australian State of the Environment Report 2001. The integrated national heritage policy will determine responsibilities and targets for identifying, conserving and protecting Australia's natural and cultural heritage. Indigenous cultural heritage issues are also considered at a national level by the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, which has an active involvement in these national directions.

Generally, historic heritage (non-Indigenous) is administered under separate legislation to Indigenous heritage, with places of archaeological or contemporary social significance often identified and administered under both forms of legislation.

The *Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter)* is nationally recognised as the guideline that informs conservation practice in Australia. The preparation of conservation management plans is also widely accepted throughout Australia, and this process is guided by *The Conservation Plan* by James Semple Kerr, the first edition of which was published in 1982. These standard guidelines have been augmented by the release of consultation and management guidelines in relation to Indigenous cultural heritage places and values. For instance, *Ask First: A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values* was published in 2002 by the Australian Heritage Commission.

The National Trust of Australia acts as a strong advocate for appropriate heritage place identification and conservation, and maintains a register of heritage places. However, the National Trust has no statutory authority in respect of the development of heritage places. In 1998 the National Trust initiated a national endangered places programme, sourced by community nominations, to highlight cultural and natural heritage places or functions under threat. An annual list is published, with a report card on the previous year's identified places.

A number of other organisations also maintain heritage regis-

ters or lists, including professional organisations such as the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Institution of Engineers, and specialist groups such as DOCOMOMO. As with the National Trust, these registers do not have any statutory authority.

Although many Indigenous cultural heritage places (particularly archaeological sites) are listed on government registers, it is widely acknowledged that these registers are incomplete, and that Indigenous community involvement in identifying their cultural heritage values is therefore essential.

Issues and Trends

At a Commonwealth level, the role of the Australian Heritage Commission (established in 1975) as the national leader in heritage management and as a major funding source has been reviewed and changes are proposed. Commonwealth legislation is currently before Parliament. If passed, it will establish a clarified regime for the protection and management of places of national significance and of places in Commonwealth ownership. Another major component of this change will be the devolution of some responsibilities to State governments and local authorities – some of which are, however, poorly equipped to accept this increase in responsibility. Commonwealth legislation for the protection of Indigenous cultural heritage has also been the subject of review for some time, and revised legislation has been foreshadowed by the Commonwealth government.

Most State agencies face increasingly expanding heritage registers, but without the increasing funding or staffing required to effectively administer the legislation, particularly in the management of the development provisions of the legislation. Some State agencies and statutory authorities are investigating the devolution of State responsibility for the management of heritage place conservation legislation to local authorities. Many local authorities are already required to address heritage place conservation within existing planning schemes. However, the majority of local authorities are poorly resourced and do not possess the specialist skills required, and therefore are incapable of effectively managing this responsibility, particularly in rural areas.

Ownership and control of data on Indigenous cultural heritage by Indigenous communities is also a current issue for Commonwealth and State agencies, particularly in relation to resourcing and the development of agreed protocols for access to information.

The identification of heritage places and the representativeness of heritage registers vary considerably from State to State. Comprehensive heritage surveys have not been completed for vast areas of Australia. Of those surveys that have been conducted, much of the information is now out of date and systematic reviews of these studies need to be undertaken to validate current data, including thematic maps. The process for the identification of heritage places also varies, with some legislation able to include precincts, but other legislation only able to identify individual places. Processes for the identification and management of cultural landscapes is also a major challenge being addressed by government and non-government heritage agencies.

The size of the individual States and some local authority areas, and the remoteness of many heritage places, contribute to the difficulty in effectively administering heritage legislation.

Every five years the Australian government prepares a State of the Environment Report, which covers all aspects of the national

environment including natural and cultural heritage. At a national level, a co-ordinated survey of the condition of registered heritage places is being proposed, in accordance with the State of the Environment reporting processes.

Declining public-sector agency budgets for heritage place conservation increasingly affect the management of heritage places. Some grant programmes have been reduced or have ceased, and there is a trend towards supporting tourism infrastructure projects – as demonstrated by the Queensland Heritage Trails capital works programme and Centenary of Federation grants funding. Generally, there is now a marked imbalance between funding for natural and cultural heritage in Australia, with large amounts of funding going to the Natural Heritage Trust.

The progress in the development of Native Title claims, and the increased practice of negotiation with Native Title claimants, continues to create pressures for changes to the processes of considering Indigenous cultural heritage values and their protection. Aside from the requirements arising from the recognition of Native Title rights, Indigenous cultural heritage legislation varies between jurisdictions in terms of the provision for active involvement and formal decision making powers for Indigenous communities.

Particular issues in relation to Indigenous cultural heritage protection and management include:

- the necessity for legislation and policy frameworks to acknowledge the need for Indigenous people to exercise their rights in relation to their cultural heritage – in particular, the need for control of cultural heritage matters to be exercised by Indigenous communities at the local level;
- the need for a core uniform national approach, including standards for Indigenous cultural heritage protection and management;
- definitions of Indigenous cultural heritage, which is much broader than archaeological sites and includes both tangible and intangible heritage;
- repatriation of human remains and culturally significant objects held in public institutions in Australia and overseas;
- promotion of increased Indigenous community control and access to Indigenous cultural heritage information;
- the linkage of cultural heritage activities to the social and economic aspirations of Indigenous communities, through employment, training and community enterprises (including commercial cultural tourism ventures);
- capacity building at the community level to enable Indigenous communities to effectively take a stronger role in managing their cultural heritage;
- the need for more uniform mechanisms for regulating the sale of moveable cultural property within Australia.

Themes of Risk

Generally, the loss of or substantial impact on Australia's heritage places continues due to the following:

- lack of resources to effectively administer heritage place conservation legislation at Commonwealth, State/Territory and local authority levels, including the identification of heritage places and the management of change;
- difficulty in obtaining appropriately skilled staff at all levels of government;
- changing legislative frameworks, and the devolution of responsibility without funding and skill resources;
- lack of resources to assist with capacity building within local government/communities (including Indigenous communities);
- inappropriate planning policies driving development;

- lack of comprehensive heritage surveys to identify heritage places – registers are currently not representative of an entire community;
- lack of funding support/incentives;
- government asset sales – lack of responsibility for the conservation of public buildings/heritage assets;
- urban redevelopment – including urban renewal of inner city areas and the resultant loss of industry etc., gentrification of older suburbs (particularly working class suburbs), small-lot housing within inner suburbs (loss of backyards), booming property markets (increase in property rates etc.);
- main-street developments and loss of facilities to larger shopping centres, spread of suburbia and its impact on surrounding districts;
- lack of recognition of 20th-century heritage, particularly post-World War II;
- abandonment of some rural structures/townships, due to changing technologies, shifting populations, changing rural use patterns, corporate policy etc.;
- redundancy of religious heritage places;
- redundancy of building types and resultant sale for adaptive re-use, asset rationalisation and mergers, and resultant closure of banks etc., technological and infrastructure change (particularly in relation to industrial heritage);
- lack of maintenance for heritage places, when viewed as an asset with a limited life span (e.g. hospitals);
- lack of recognition of the broad range of Indigenous cultural heritage places and values, especially in relation to 'natural' areas;
- relatively poor knowledge about Indigenous cultural heritage places, other than archaeological sites – particularly in relation to contemporary and historical associations and spiritually significant places.

Existing/Emerging Solutions

The proposed integrated national heritage policy will target the tourism industry, because of its important links with environment and heritage management, with a national strategy to promote heritage tourism being proposed. Other targets for the integrated national heritage policy include establishing a task force to develop more effective incentives for the conservation of heritage places by government, industry and the community, with existing opportunities being identified.

There are a range of programmes, including thematic studies, at State and Commonwealth level aimed at making heritage registers more representative, with publications by various State and Commonwealth agencies aimed at capacity building both across government and within the community.

Models for integrated assessment of cultural and natural values, including surveys of the forest estate and large-scale regional surveys, are being developed. Cultural mapping methods for identifying the broad range of Indigenous cultural heritage values within an area are also being developed.

Funding programmes such as the Queensland Heritage Trails Network, Centenary of Federation and the historic rural hotels funding programme have provided for the conservation of significant places, particularly in rural areas.

There is an increasing requirement for local governments to address cultural heritage matters via local planning schemes. The ongoing devolution of responsibility for heritage places to local government, with adequate funding and the facilitation of capacity building, can empower local communities to better identify and conserve their heritage places.

There have been several major conferences and workshops addressing heritage place conservation. These include the Australia ICOMOS 20th-Century Heritage Conference (Adelaide, South Australia) 2001 which placed 20th-century heritage on the agenda nationally. The Australia ICOMOS 'Making Tracks' conference (Alice Springs, Northern Territory) 2001 assisted in broadening our thinking about the cultural heritage of routes and tracks, including the integration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous meanings and the interplay between natural and cultural landscapes. The recent 'Islands of Vanishment' conference (Port Arthur, Tasmania) 2002 explored the conservation and interpretation of historic places that commemorate painful or ambivalent themes in the history of our societies.

The Australia ICOMOS Statement on Indigenous Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2001. The Revised Burra Charter (1999) has provided a framework for advancing conservation methodology and practices that address the more intangible aspects of cultural heritage. This has been further facilitated by the release of the Burra Charter in video format. A revised Illustrated Burra Charter is being prepared.

The ICOMOS Montreal Plan on 20th-century heritage seeks to identify and raise awareness of 20th-century heritage worldwide. The National Trust of Australia, through its advocacy role, compiles an annual list of endangered places, which assists in raising community awareness.

Co-management arrangements between Indigenous people and land management agencies aim to ensure that Indigenous cultural heritage values are acknowledged and respected in all areas of management.

Case Study 1: Festival Hall, corner Albert and Charlotte Streets, Brisbane, Queensland

Festival Hall, erected in 1958–59 as Brisbane's principal concert and popular entertainment venue, is important historically for its strong association with popular entertainment in Queensland, particularly with boxing and popular music. The site has had an association with popular entertainment since 1910, and Festival Hall is illustrative of the emergence of teenage culture and the advent of 'rock and roll' in the mid-20th century. Festival Hall also has historical significance as the largest public entertainment venue in Queensland until the opening of the Boondall Entertainment Centre in 1986, and for its association with Queensland's celebration in 1959 of its centenary of separation from New South Wales. At the time of construction, the place was considered to be at the forefront of design and technological expertise in Queensland, and a showcase for the Queensland construction industry.

Festival Hall is important also in demonstrating the principal characteristics of its type: a substantial, multi-purpose-designed popular entertainment venue, designed to accommodate a variety of entertainments from boxing and wrestling to indoor sports to live concerts and dances. Externally the form of the building mirrors the internal functions, with the Charlotte Street elevation reflecting the raked seating at the northern and southern sides of the building, and the raised central auditorium roof indicating the position of the boxing ring. The building survives remarkably intact, and remains an excellent example of its type.

The place has aesthetic significance, engendered by the elegant form and the clean lines of its Charlotte and Albert Street façades, inspired by the principles of international modernist architectural style. It also has social significance, because of its strong associa-



Festival Hall: Corner of Albert and Charlotte Streets, Brisbane, August 2001 (Qld Environmental Protection Agency file ref. 602154)

tion for several generations of Queenslanders as Queensland's principal popular entertainment venue from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s, with a variety of popular entertainment. The place still has a strong association with Queensland's youth as a venue for local, emerging popular music groups.

Despite the considerable significance of Festival Hall, it has been sold and will be demolished and a residential apartment tower constructed on the site. The place was nominated to the Queensland Heritage Register, however the Queensland Heritage Council has determined that, in accordance with the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*, there is no prospect of the cultural heritage significance of the place being conserved and therefore it does not satisfy the criteria for entry in the heritage register. This determination was based on considerable evidence including:

- The place is no longer commercially viable as an entertainment venue, due to increased competition from larger, modern and better equipped facilities, and the higher standards required or expected by contemporary clients. As a result, the numbers of patrons have dropped to 10% of those enjoyed by Festival Hall 10 years ago.
- The large number of residential developments completed within the Brisbane central business district has resulted in a huge increase of residents within an area of the city that traditionally had very few residents. These residents have voiced their concern about excessive noise levels and the operating hours of venues such as Festival Hall, and of many inner city hotels, and the problems associated with huge crowds departing the venue. These complaints have resulted in restricted noise levels and operating hours, and some live performances are no longer possible/viable.
- The inner city location presents significant problems with crowd control and the provision of adequate parking facilities.
- The design and construction of Festival Hall, and its central business district corner location, limits the adaptive re-use possibilities for the building. Also, the local government zoning would allow a high rise commercial development on the site.

The issues surrounding the eventual demolition of Festival Hall demonstrate several of the themes of risk as identified above (Source: Queensland Environmental Protection Agency file reference 602154).

Case Study 2: The Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga) on the north-west coast of the Pilbara, Western Australia

The Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga) is a unique ecological and archaeological province on the north-west coast of the Pilbara, Western Australia.

The Burrup features what is regarded as one of the world's largest and most significant collection of petroglyphs, ancient rock-art engravings dating back tens of thousands of years. Thousands of carvings cover the rocky landscape of the peninsula and surrounding islands. The area also possesses a major corpus of standing stones, the largest occurrence in Australia.

The Burrup is an artificial peninsula, formed when Dampier Island was connected to the mainland by a causeway constructed in the 1960s, when major industrial facilities were established in the remote region. Currently six giant gas processing plants are proposed for the peninsula, together with associated development – including infrastructure corridors, port expansions, water-desalination plants and quarry expansions.

If this development proceeds, rock art is in danger of being damaged or relocated during construction, and the future emissions of sulphur and nitrogen from these plants may form acidic compounds that could gradually destroy the carvings. Scientific data predict that the rock art will begin to disappear by 2030. Concern has been expressed that the management plan for the area will afford no real protection for this significant rock art.

Reports indicate that, collectively, the proposed heavy industry in the region may be responsible for emitting an additional 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, and this may also have a deleterious effect on the regions' unique ecosystem. Furthermore, there appear to be prudent and feasible alternatives to the proposed location of the development, in particular the Maitland Heavy Industry Estate on the mainland, which would allow the development to proceed but also conserve the Burrup Peninsula's significant collection of petroglyphs (Sourced from Bednarik 2002, and the web pages 'Save Dampier Rock Art' and 'Dampier Information Page').

Report authorship

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Stylised face image (R. Bednarik, 'Dampier Information Page')

ICOMOS Executive Committee. The report builds on the Australia ICOMOS Heritage at Risk 2001–2002 report prepared by Sharon Sullivan and Sheridan Burke.

Australia ICOMOS

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Panel of petroglyphs (R. Bednarik, 'Save Dampier Rock Art')

