

5.0 CONSERVATION POLICY

5.1 OBLIGATIONS ARISING FROM CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In developing a Conservation Policy for the Buchan Caves Reserve, a major input is the consideration of the heritage values—or cultural significance—of the place. The analysis and assessment of individual components (Section 3.0) and overall analysis of cultural significance (section 4.0) provides this information. In particular, the cultural significance provides several obligations that must be addressed in the Conservation Policy (section 5.0). In summary:

- Most of these relate to the evolving development of the Reserve from the late nineteenth century to the present;
- Most relate to the overall development of the landscape through the provision of facilities for management of the site and for visitors;
- Some are continuous, especially on-going patterns of use;
- Some are isolated and relate to individual items (especially hard landscape features, such as buildings); and
- Obligations vary for each component (i.e. the reserve overall; cave infrastructure; vegetation; camping areas; buildings and structures; roads and tracks; and documentation and interpretation).

The translation of the Statement of Cultural Significance into tangible opportunities and constraints includes the following:

- Recognition of the outstanding cultural significance as a major determinant in future development of the place;
- Retention of the long-established use as a Reserve within the current boundaries, especially in light of the evolving nature of this use reflecting wide social and scientific concerns, and recognition of this as the main determinant in management and future development of the place;
- Recognition of the diverse and steadily evolving significance, qualities imbued in the fabric of the place itself as well as the activities which it generates; and
- Acknowledgment that rankings of heritage values (listed in Section 3.0) used to assist in the assessment of cultural significance will form the basis for any conservation actions or future developments.

5.2 OWNER/MANAGER'S NEEDS AND RESOURCES

5.2.1 Ownership and management

Buchan Caves Reserve is a crown land reserve (Rs 1288) of the Government of Victoria. It is managed under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, administered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Departmental management is the responsibility of Parks Victoria. The *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* lists a number of purposes for which land can be reserved, and Buchan Caves Reserve is currently reserved as a site for [Dale/Ray: can you please supply this detail?]

There is currently no adopted plan of management for Buchan Caves Reserve, but several reports guide current operations.

- ‘The Burra Charter: the Australian ICOMOS Charter for places of Cultural Significance’ (1979) provides an important series of guidelines and standard for the management of cultural heritage sites. It was revised and republished 1999. The parallel ‘Australian Natural Heritage Charter’ (1996) provides equivalent guidelines and standards for the management of natural heritage sites. Both of these are supported by various manuals and handbooks, and together provide an important baseline for management at Buchan.
- Peter Boadle, Bairnsdale Region, Department of Conservation and Environment, ‘The Management of Karst and Cave Resources in the Buchan and Murrindal Area’ (draft), prepared for the Department of Conservation and Environment, September 1991. This seminal management report on the Buchan area generally and the Buchan Caves Reserve in particular, has formed an important background document for all subsequent of this rich natural and cultural resource. Although not officially adopted, the report has been an invaluable guide for those involved in day-to-day management of the Reserve. The report requires updating and reviewing (including the landscape master plan proposals), especially following completion of current Heritage Action Plan.
- [Author?], ‘Parks Victoria - Draft Directions in Historic Places Management’, prepared for Parks Victoria, May 2001. This brief report sets a strategic framework for considering historic places within the Parks Victoria portfolio. At this strategic level, Buchan Caves Reserve is included in the ‘Natural Wonders of Victoria’ grouping.
- [Author? Stephanie Finn?], ‘Buchan Caves Reserve: Heritage Action Statement’, prepared for Parks Victoria, June 2002. This brief report canvassed ‘desired management outcomes’ and actions required to achieve these.

The cultural values of Buchan Caves Reserve have long been recognised and incorporated into management, although formal recognition through listing on the Victorian Heritage Register has been a very recent development. The major previous works to examine the cultural significance of the site have been as follows.

- Elery Hamilton-Smith, [History of Buchan Caves], typescript manuscript, [c.1986]. This work is based on very thorough research, including extensive use of the Lands Department reserve file Rs1288 and notes from local newspapers. Considerable use of this work has been made in several later works, including the current Heritage Action Plan.
- John Hawker, Horticultural Project Officer, Department of Conservation and Environment, [report on landscaping of Buchan Caves Reserve], prepared for Department of Conservation and Environment, July 1990. This brief report, prepared prior to the Buchan Caves Management Plan (1991), is the first document to analyse the significance of Hugh Linaker’s landscaping of the Buchan Caves Reserve.
- National Trust of Australia (Victoria), ‘Buchan Caves Reserve’, classification report prepared for the National Trust, 1994. This report prepared by National Trust Gardens Project Officer Richard Aitken, which drew substantially on historical research prepared by Elery Hamilton-Smith (see above), formed the basis for the National Trust’s classification of the Buchan Caves Reserve. This classification report has been used as a basis for analysis in several later works.
- Peter Ackroyd and Elery Hamilton-Smith, ‘An Idyllic Setting: The Buchan Caves Reserve’, *Gippsland Heritage Journal*, 25, 2001, pp.16–23. An important new analysis of the landscape setting of Buchan Caves Reserve, highlighting the roles of Wilson, Linaker, Lind, and Sandford.

Other recent reports of lesser relevance to the current Heritage Action Plan include the following.

- Urban Spatial & Economic Consultants Pty Ltd, 'Buchan Caves Reserve: Situation Analysis / Strategic Audit', prepared for Parks Victoria [not stated anywhere in report—check with Dale?], September 1997. Gives a business profile, market framework, organisational and financial situation, and business plan options.
- Andrew Long & Associates (Andrew Long, Petra Schell, and Ian Clark), 'Buchan Caves Reserve: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Survey', prepared for Parks Victoria, May 2000. This report presents the results of an archaeological assessment of Buchan caves reserve. The current Heritage Action Plan has specifically been limited to European heritage considerations, but the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Survey has important implications for any revised master plan for Buchan Caves Reserve.
- Christine Wrench, Regional Business Officer, East Region, Parks Victoria, 'Buchan Caves Draft Business Plan', prepared for Parks Victoria, August 2000. This report provides useful background to current thinking within Parks Victoria about the operations within Buchan Caves Reserve and would give broad input to any revised master plan for the Reserve.

5.2.2 Recent works and current proposals

Several recent reports and works touching on the cultural significance of Buchan Caves Reserve have been undertaken and these are detailed in the following chronological list.

- I.W. Smith & P.A. Clements, 'Tree Assessment - Eastern Region', prepared for Parks Victoria, May 1999. Provides specific advice for 32 trees in Buchan Caves Reserve. Some of these actions have already been carried out and others are pending.
- Sinclair Knight Merz, 'Assessment of Elevated Structures: Victoria East Region (Buchan, Tarra Bulga, Gippsland Lakes)', prepared for Parks Victoria, June 1999. This report considers three stairways in the Buchan Caves (entrance to Fairy Cave, exit to Fairy Cave, and steel stairs in Royal Cave), and the lookout and stairs at Spring Creek Falls. Whilst the Spring Creek Falls are located outside the study area of the current Heritage Action Plan, the recommendations for the cave stairs are endorsed and referenced in the Heritage Action Plan.
- RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants Pty Ltd, 'Building Condition Review Pertaining to the Buchan Caves Kiosk (Visitors Centre) at the Buchan Caves Reserve, Buchan', prepared for Parks Victoria, May 2001. This report was commissioned to determine the condition of building fabric and the potential for, and cost effectiveness of, an adaptation and extension to the existing facility in order to upgrade the infrastructure to provide an enhanced visitor experience including improved facilities for retailing and ticket sales. The limited scope of the analysis of this report is unfortunate, as this is one of the most culturally significant buildings in the Reserve. In particular, no reference was made to the copy of the original architectural drawings held at Buchan Caves Reserve, and this has resulted in an under-valuing of the verandah section of the building. It is also regrettable that this report was commissioned in isolation, and that its analysis and recommendations were not subject to the wider overview of the Reserve provided by the current Heritage Action Plan. By far the most unfortunate sequel to this report has been the building of the new interpretation facility, which is attached to and overwhelms the kiosk, in direct contradiction to the recommendations of the RBA report.

- Don Goldsworthy and Associates, ‘Staging Report for Visitor Centre Refurbishment and Masterplan for Buchan Caves Reserve’, prepared for Parks Victoria, November 2001. The report includes staged master plan proposals, including the new interpretation centre (built 2002), temporary closure of the main road and redirection of traffic onto secondary roads, relocation of visitor parking, new turning circle and coach parking arrangements, new Spring Creek pedestrian bridge and walking track, a new circular plaza, a new administrative block, and an ‘Icon on Moon Hill’. These master plan proposals were prepared with little or no consideration of natural, cultural, or aboriginal archaeological values, and the document should be superseded by a new, and more comprehensive and consultative master plan for the whole of the Buchan Caves Reserve, building on the 1991 Management Plan prepared by Peter Boadle (see above).

- Robert Sands Pty Ltd, ‘Royal Cave at the Buchan Caves Reserve, Buchan, Victoria: Conservation Management Plan’ (draft), prepared for Parks Victoria, February 2003. This report was commissioned to establish the cultural significance of the tourist infrastructure in Royal Cave and to provide a conservation policy, especially with a view to potential upgrading. The report utilised early photographs from the State Library of Victoria and a detailed physical survey, but did not greatly extend on the historical documentation of previous studies by reference to any of the considerable documentary evidence held by Parks Victoria and other government agencies. In summary, the report concluded that the present infrastructure could be retained for as long as it was performing an adequate job, but if upgrading was required only sample sections of the infrastructure need be retained (but no specific recommendations were made about which sections should be retained). This finding in broad agreement with the current Heritage Action Plan.

5.2.3 Funding

Fees are charged for camping within Buchan Caves Reserve and charges are also made for entry and guided tours of the caves. These fees are paid directly into the State’s consolidated revenue and an annual allocation is made back to Parks Victoria through the normal budgetary processes through the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Funding for the Reserve is very moderate compared with levels required to undertake any upgrading, and most proposals made in the current Heritage Action Plan or any future master plan would require additional funding, either recurrently or as special allocations.

5.2.3 Aspirations

Dale Calnin, Buchan Caves Reserve, identified the following projects for possible future budget or grant allocations (with budget estimates in brackets):

- Replacement of powerheads within camping ground (\$20,000)
- Removal and replacement of asbestos in sheds near tennis courts (\$80,000)
- Lighting infrastructure upgrade in Royal Cave (\$500,000)
- Revision of 1991 Buchan Caves Management Plan (\$30,000)
- Fencing of park boundaries (\$20,000)
- Replacement of bridges (\$400,000)
- Royal Cave entrance tunnel refurbishment (\$10,000)
- Construction of picnic rotunda near Royal Cave entrance (\$5,000)
- Replacement of barbecues (x6) (\$12,000)
- Upgrade of main camp site area, top dressing of lawn, asphalt roads, sign posts (\$15,000)
- North Arm sillage/drainage system linked to sewerage plant (\$30,000)
- Picnic shelters over barbecue areas (x3) (\$20,000)

A new low-priced guidebook has also been identified as a desirable means of interpreting the cultural values of the reserve.

For the centenary of the discovery of Fairy Cave (2007) a major international conference has been proposed for Buchan. This would be an ideal date to showcase new interpretation and upgrading of infrastructure, but plans are in the formative state only as yet.

5.3 EXTERNAL FACTORS

5.3.1 Heritage recognition

The Buchan Caves Reserve (including numerous individually scheduled items) was listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (register number H1978) on 13 February 2003. This means that any works proposed for the site must be submitted to Heritage Victoria for approval, although a comprehensive schedule of permit exemptions were included in the determination. The Buchan Caves reserve is also covered by a Heritage Overlay of the East Gippsland Planning Scheme (HO241) [what implications?]

The Buchan Caves Reserve is also classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), with a level of statewide significance (file ???). This is a general recognition of the high cultural values of the rather than a form of statutory control, although the Trust is likely comment on any proposals that jeopardise the cultural significance of the place. The Buchan Caves Reserve is also included on the interim list of the Register of the National Estate (file 2/09/274/0011) administered by the Australian Heritage Commission but the Commission is unlikely to seek to influence any future decisions at Buchan Caves reserve unless the cultural significance of the place is likely to be seriously jeopardised.

5.3.2 Legislative controls

Apart from the requirements of heritage listings, there are numerous other legislative controls that apply to Buchan Caves Reserve. It is beyond the brief of the current Heritage Action Plan to examine these comprehensively, but most relate to public use of the reserve and various aspects of liability and workplace health and safety.

5.3.3 Community needs and social context

As part of the current Heritage Action Plan, a community meeting was held in the Guides' room at Buchan Caves Reserve on 20 May 2003. The background and expected outcomes of the Action Plan were discussed, and issues surrounding the cultural significance of Buchan Cave reserve and how this might affect future management were presented. An edited transcript of the address to the community meeting by Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith is included as Appendix Five of this report.

5.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.4.1 THE RESERVE OVERALL

| Risk | Present | Potential | Trend | Comments |
|------|---------|-----------|-------|----------|
|------|---------|-----------|-------|----------|

| | impact | impact | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---|---|
| <i>Visitor use and abuse</i> | none | none | ➔ | Not applicable |
| <i>Structural adequacy</i> | none | none | ➔ | Not applicable |
| <i>Environmental factors</i> | low | high | ⬆ | The archival documentation stored at the Reserve is not housed in ideal environmental conditions, with a long-term risk of damage through dampness and humidity; a bushfire, whilst a low-risk event, could result in total loss of all such documentation, vital to the assessment and interpretation of cultural values |
| <i>Social and political factors</i> | none | medium | ↗ | The risk exists that future management could respond to commercial pressures to reduce the size of the reserve or in other ways alter its purpose, potentially jeopardising heritage values |

5.4.2 CAVE INFRASTRUCTURE

| Risk | Present impact | Potential impact | Trend | Comments |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--|
| <i>Visitor use and abuse</i> | low | low | ➔ | The cave infrastructure is unlikely to be damaged through normal use (especially given the guided nature of tours); abuse by determined visitors could cause some damage but this is more likely to the natural features than the infrastructure |
| <i>Structural adequacy</i> | low | low | ➔ | The infrastructure in the caves appears to be over-engineered and is unlikely to cause problems (apart from previously identified issues); regular checking and maintenance is, however, essential |
| <i>Environmental factors</i> | low | medium | ↗ | Corrosion or deterioration of timber, metal, and concrete components is likely to be the major cause of risk to the infrastructure; the wrought iron posts that support much of the handrailing have shown corrosion resistance, but may be covered with a layer of rust resulting from the use of inappropriate cable or rod in the handrail. |

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| <i>Social and political factors</i> | low | low | ➔ | Given that the natural values far outweigh cultural ones in the caves, there is little likelihood that cultural values will be placed under risk by wider social or political factors |
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5.4.3 VEGETATION

| Risk | Present impact | Potential impact | Trend | Comments |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--|
| <i>Visitor use and abuse</i> | low | high | ↑ | Visitor impact in the form of increased visitation and resulting potential for soil compaction around roots presents a risk to tree health and stability; vandalism is not currently a problem in the reserve |
| <i>Structural adequacy</i> | low | very high | ↑ | The older trees, many dating to Linaker, require careful and regular monitoring as their structural adequacy inevitably declines with age; limb-drop in particular may be a problem Younger trees need to be observed and formatively pruned where necessary to promote strong limb development and good structure Limb growth resulting from epicormic shoots in eucalypts after injury needs regular shortening to increase strength of branch attachment |
| <i>Environmental factors</i> | low | very high | ↑ | Older trees have well established root systems that guard against transitory impact of drought and flood; however their age makes them more susceptible to damage from such factors, and environmental stressors should be minimised Younger trees have more vigour and may outgrow or resist pests and disease threats; less able to cope with other environmental stresses due to less extensive root systems Newly planted trees will usually need supplementary watering for the first two years; placing a biodegradable root barrier to around the edges of the planting |

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| | | | | <p>hole will assist young roots to establish unhindered by mature superior root systems; protection with tree guards from rabbit and kangaroo depredation will be required.</p> <p>Weed infestation is fairly light, with isolated areas of blackberry and vinca observed in the northern arm camping ground; native trees with weed potential such as Cootamundra Wattle (<i>Acacia baileyana</i>) should be removed from the reserve; some control of suckers (e.g elm at the edge of creeks should be monitored and may need thinning to maintain waterflows</p> |
| <i>Social and political factors</i> | low/ none | very high | ↑ | <p>The impetus from some quarters to replace exotic trees with indigenous ones in National Parks could be a potential threat to these trees, the majority of which are exotics, which have cultural, but not scientific (i.e. ecological) value; it is vital to communicate to the public the differing values held by the indigenous/native and exotic trees and the importance of maintaining the contrast in vegetation types in the valley and on the higher slopes</p> |

5.4.4 CAMPING AREAS

| Risk | Present impact | Potential impact | Trend | Comments |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--|
| <i>Visitor use and abuse</i> | low | high | ↑ | <p>The camping areas are the places where most visitors congregate for the duration of their stay and isolated abuse rather than consistent use is likely to pose the greatest risk, especially vandalism to the rock edging, buildings and structures, and vegetation</p> |
| <i>Structural adequacy</i> | none | low | → | <p>Structural adequacy is unlikely to pose a risk to the camping areas generally, but might be an issue with individual components, which are treated elsewhere</p> |
| <i>Environmental factors</i> | none | low | ↗ | <p>Flood damage and bushfires are the main environmental factors but like structural adequacy, these</p> |

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| | | | | are unlikely to pose a great risk to the camping grounds themselves, but rather to individual components |
| <i>Social and political factors</i> | low | high | ↑ | The risk exists that future management could respond to commercial pressures to develop the Reserve in ways that are inconsistent with its cultural significance, especially given the subtlety of some of the Reserve's cultural values compared with the outstanding natural values of the caves themselves |

5.4.5 BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

| Risk | Present impact | Potential impact | Trend | Comments |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---|
| <i>Visitor use and abuse</i> | low | medium | ↗ | Most of the buildings and structures at Buchan Caves reserve are appropriately designed for their setting to withstand normal visitor use, and abuse such as vandalism poses the major risk in this category |
| <i>Structural adequacy</i> | low high (entrance archway) | high | ↑ | Most of the buildings and structures within the reserve are well maintained, although the structural adequacy of the entrance archway following its recent rebuilding (incorporating extra height) is a very high risk due to increased spreading load on the masonry columns |
| <i>Environmental factors</i> | low | high | ↑ | Many of the culturally significant buildings and structures are of masonry, relatively stable as a material but requiring regular inspection and maintenance to jointing; some buildings and structures (such as Caves House, rotunda, and store) are built of or incorporate significant use of timber, which requires regular inspection and maintenance; bushfires pose a potentially high risk to these latter buildings and structures |
| <i>Social and political factors</i> | none | medium | ↗ | The risk exists that future management could respond to commercial pressures to reduce the size of the reserve or in other |

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| | | | | ways alter its purpose potentially jeopardising heritage values |
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5.4.6 ROADS AND TRACKS

| Risk | Present impact | Potential impact | Trend | Comments |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---|
| <i>Visitor use and abuse</i> | low | low | ➔ | Speed limits and general remoteness of the Buchan Caves Reserve ensure that traffic does not pose a major problem to roads and bridges, apart from the need for normal maintenance; the walking tracks are likewise unlikely to suffer overuse (or abuse) given the nature of the visitor profile of the reserve |
| <i>Structural adequacy</i> | low | medium | ↗ | As noted above, the roads within the Reserve require regular maintenance but their engineering appears appropriate for the intensity of use; the bridges should be subject to regular safety checks and if upgrading is required, culturally significant elements such as the abutments, the timber decking, and the simple handrail design should be maintained; the construction of the walking tracks appears appropriate for their intended use although like the roads these require regular maintenance |
| <i>Environmental factors</i> | low | high | ↑ | Given the proximity of the roads and bridges to the creeks, flood damage could arise after abnormally high rainfall; likewise, bushfires or deliberately lit fires could cause serious damage or even total loss of timber components to the bridges; both these environmental factors have a low risk of occurring, but could potentially be a high risk when they do; high rainfall or fallen trees are likely to cause most potential risk to walking tracks |
| <i>Social and political factors</i> | low | medium | ↗ | A bureaucratic approach to risk management may place the bridges under more pressure than natural factors if the perceived risks of timber decking are allowed to override sensible |

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| | | | | engineering advice |
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5.5 USE OPTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The primary use of Buchan Caves Reserve based largely on leisure and recreation within a natural and designed landscape setting, has been identified as an aspect of the place that contributes to the cultural significance of the place. This primary use has not changed since the Reserve was first set aside, and was consolidated into its present form with the upgrading of the site in 1938. It is, therefore, a use which best conserves the cultural significance of the reserve as a whole.

Other uses could exist alongside this primary use, but the charm of the Reserve is subtle, and could easily be jeopardised by competing uses. In any future master plan, these uses would need to be tested against the cultural significance of the site, and only when it was clear that they did not have the potential to jeopardise the cultural significance should they be permitted. Some minor changes of use might be appropriate where they do not jeopardise the cultural significance of the site. The tennis court is an example of this. Given changing patterns of use with the reserve, the tennis court is now considered quite distant from the main camping ground. If a future master plan for the whole reserve suggested a reorganisation and consolidation of the works depot on the current site, then a new use for the tennis court that did not affect the formation of the court, or its visual appearance as a fenced enclosure might be acceptable.

5.6 SUMMARY

There is a long history of visiting caves for leisure and recreation, and Buchan Caves Reserve is therefore part of a national and international network. This network, based as it is on a common resource and much shared enthusiasm, has considerable potential for interpretation of the natural world in a manner that is both enjoyable and healthy. Much can be achieved with shared knowledge and experience. Conserving the caves is an integral part of this interpretative use. Buchan Caves Reserve is also part of a much wider linear and regional tourist network, and all sites in this network would benefit from integrated conservation and promotion.

At Buchan, the outstanding natural significance of the caves is overlaid with rich cultural significance, with values embracing historic, social, aesthetic, and scientific. The Buchan Caves Reserve derives much of its significance from the design of its landscape, a skilful bending of exotic trees with the natural bushland and topography. The organic nature of this designed landscape will require careful conservation over the long term to ensure the survival of its original design intent. Whilst the conservation of these European-influenced attributes may seem at odds with the current philosophy of most National Parks, Parks Victoria has a mandate to manage its diverse portfolio of sites in a way that respects their intrinsic significance, be it cultural or natural.

The material contained in this European Heritage Action Plan has carefully assessed all aspects of the site, and the conservation policy that follows is a direct reflection of the cultural values. It is fortunate that at Buchan, the management skills needed to provide long-term care and protection are already in place, and that this long tradition of caring for natural resources should ensure a seamless adoption of the recommendations of this Action Plan.

5.7 CONSERVATION POLICY

5.7.1 Use

That the current use of the Buchan Caves Reserve, which balances leisure and recreation with conservation and interpretation of the caves, be maintained.

5.7.2 Management

That the current centralised management be maintained, but in a manner that permits flexibility to respond to special local conditions, especially where these affect the cultural values identified in this report

5.7.3 Fabric and setting

That the fabric and setting of the Buchan Caves Reserve up to and including the 1938 work and its post-war consolidation as summarised in the statement of cultural significance be conserved

That the rankings of cultural significance contained in this report be adopted for specific conservation actions

5.7.4 Interpretation

That interpretation of Buchan Caves Reserve include the cultural values as identified in the current Heritage Action Plan

5.7.5 Future developments

That future developments be subject to a comprehensive master plan which that draws strongly on the current Heritage Action Plan

5.7.6 Adoption and review

That this Heritage Action Plan be formally adopted by Parks Victoria and reviewed every decade, or where significant new evidence is uncovered