

The Burra Charter

1999

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance



THE BURRA CHARTER

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places
of Cultural Significance 1999

with associated Guidelines and Code on the
Ethics of Co-existence



Australia ICOMOS Inc

International Council of Monuments and Sites

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contents

The Burra Charter, 1999	1
Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance, 1988	11
Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy, 1988	14
Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports, 1988	18
Code on the Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places, 1998	20
Notes on the 1999 revisions to the Burra Charter	22
Conversion table: Burra Charter, 1999 and previous version	23

ICOMOS

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental professional organisation formed in 1965, with headquarters in Paris. ICOMOS is primarily concerned with the philosophy, terminology, methodology and techniques of cultural heritage conservation. It is closely linked to UNESCO, particularly in its role under the World Heritage Convention 1972 as UNESCO's principal adviser on cultural matters related to World Heritage. The 5,000 members of ICOMOS include architects, town planners, demographers, archaeologists, geographers, historians, conservators, anthropologists and heritage administrators. Members in the 84 countries belonging to ICOMOS are formed into National Committees and participate in a range of conservation projects, research work, intercultural exchanges and cooperative activities. ICOMOS also has a number of International Scientific Committees that focus on particular aspects of the conservation field. The members meet triennially in a General Assembly.

Australia ICOMOS Inc.

The Australian National Committee of ICOMOS (Australia ICOMOS Inc.) was formed in 1976. It elects an Executive Committee of 15 members, which is responsible for carrying out national programs and participating in decisions of ICOMOS as an international organisation. It provides expert advice as required by ICOMOS, especially in its relationship with the World heritage Committee. Australia ICOMOS acts as a national and international link between public authorities, institutions and individuals involved in the study and conservation of all places of cultural significance. Australia ICOMOS members participate in a range of conservation activities including site visits, training, conferences and meetings.

Revision of the Burra Charter

The Burra Charter was first adopted in 1979 at the historic South Australian mining town of Burra; minor revisions were made in 1981 and 1988. Following a five year review, more substantial changes were made resulting in this version which was adopted by Australia ICOMOS in November 1999. All Australia ICOMOS documents are regularly reviewed and Australia ICOMOS welcomes any comments.

This booklet also contains the three Guidelines to the Burra Charter and the Code on the Ethics of Co-existence. These have yet to be revised to accord with the 1999 Charter, but are included here for completeness. Australia ICOMOS plans to update them with the aim of completing a consistent suite of documents when the Charter itself is next reviewed.

To assist those familiar with previous versions of the Charter, this booklet also contains some notes explaining the key changes made and a conversion table relating articles in the 1999 Charter to those of the previous version.

Important Note

The 1988 version of the Burra Charter has now been superseded and joins the 1981 and 1979 versions as archival documents recording the development of conservation philosophy in Australia.

Citing the Burra Charter

The full reference is *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999*.

Initial textual references should be in the form of the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999* and later references in the short form (*Burra Charter*).

The Burra Charter

(The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance)

Preamble

Considering the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice 1964), and the Resolutions of the 5th General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (Moscow 1978), the Burra Charter was adopted by Australia ICOMOS (the Australian National Committee of ICOMOS) on 19 August 1979 at Burra, South Australia. Revisions were adopted on 23 February 1981, 23 April 1988 and 26 November 1999.

The Burra Charter provides guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance (cultural heritage places), and is based on the knowledge and experience of Australia ICOMOS members.

Conservation is an integral part of the management of places of cultural significance and is an ongoing responsibility.

Who is the Charter for?

The Charter sets a standard of practice for those who provide advice, make decisions about, or undertake works to places of cultural significance, including owners, managers and custodians.

Using the Charter

The Charter should be read as a whole. Many articles are interdependent. Articles in the Conservation Principles section are often further developed in the Conservation Processes and Conservation Practice sections. Headings have been included for ease of reading but do not form part of the Charter.

The Charter is self-contained, but aspects of its use and application are further explained in the following Australia ICOMOS documents:

- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance;

- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy;
- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports;
- Code on the Ethics of Coexistence in Conserving Significant Places.

What places does the Charter apply to?

The Charter can be applied to all types of places of cultural significance including natural, indigenous and historic places with cultural values.

The standards of other organisations may also be relevant. These include the Australian Natural Heritage Charter and the Draft Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places.

Why conserve?

Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. They are historical records, that are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience. Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious.

These places of cultural significance must be conserved for present and future generations.

The Burra Charter advocates a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.

Articles

Article 1. Definitions

For the purposes of this Charter:

- 1.1 *Place* means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views.
- 1.2 *Cultural significance* means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

Cultural significance is embodied in the *place* itself, its *fabric*, *setting*, *use*, *associations*, *meanings*, records, *related places* and *related objects*.

Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.
- 1.3 *Fabric* means all the physical material of the *place* including components, fixtures, contents, and objects.
- 1.4 *Conservation* means all the processes of looking after a *place* so as to retain its *cultural significance*.
- 1.5 *Maintenance* means the continuous protective care of the *fabric* and *setting* of a *place*, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves restoration or reconstruction.
- 1.6 *Preservation* means maintaining the *fabric* of a *place* in its existing state and retarding deterioration.
- 1.7 *Restoration* means returning the existing *fabric* of a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.
- 1.8 *Reconstruction* means returning a *place* to a known earlier state and is distinguished from *restoration* by the introduction of new material into the *fabric*.
- 1.9 *Adaptation* means modifying a *place* to suit the existing use or a proposed use.
- 1.10 *Use* means the functions of a place, as well as the activities and practices that may occur at the place.
- 1.11 *Compatible use* means a use which respects the *cultural significance* of a *place*. Such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on cultural significance.
- 1.12 *Setting* means the area around a *place*, which may include the visual catchment.
- 1.13 *Related place* means a place that contributes to the *cultural significance* of another place.

Explanatory Notes

The concept of place should be broadly interpreted. The elements described in Article 1.1 may include memorials, trees, gardens, parks, places of historical events, urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places.

The term cultural significance is synonymous with heritage significance and cultural heritage value.

Cultural significance may change as a result of the continuing history of the place.

Understanding of cultural significance may change as a result of new information.

Fabric includes building interiors and sub-surface remains, as well as excavated material.

Fabric may define spaces and these may be important elements of the significance of the place.

The distinctions referred to, for example in relation to roof gutters, are:

- maintenance — regular inspection and cleaning of gutters;
- repair involving restoration — returning of dislodged gutters;
- repair involving reconstruction — replacing decayed gutters.

It is recognised that all places and their components change over time at varying rates.

New material may include recycled material salvaged from other places. This should not be to the detriment of any place of cultural significance.

Articles

- 1.14 *Related object* means an object that contributes to the *cultural significance* of a *place* but is not at the place.
- 1.15 *Associations* mean the special connections that exist between people and a *place*.
- 1.16 *Meanings* denote what a *place* signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses.
- 1.17 *Interpretation* means all the ways of presenting the *cultural significance* of a *place*.

Conservation Principles

Article 2. Conservation and management

- 2.1 *Places* of *cultural significance* should be conserved.
- 2.2 The aim of *conservation* is to retain the *cultural significance* of a *place*.
- 2.3 *Conservation* is an integral part of good management of *places* of *cultural significance*.
- 2.4 *Places* of *cultural significance* should be safeguarded and not put at risk or left in a vulnerable state.

Article 3. Cautious approach

- 3.1 *Conservation* is based on a respect for the existing *fabric, use, associations* and *meanings*. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.
- 3.2 Changes to a *place* should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.

Article 4. Knowledge, skills and techniques

- 4.1 *Conservation* should make use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of the *place*.
- 4.2 Traditional techniques and materials are preferred for the *conservation* of significant *fabric*. In some circumstances modern techniques and materials which offer substantial conservation benefits may be appropriate.

Explanatory Notes

Associations may include social or spiritual values and cultural responsibilities for a place.

Meanings generally relate to intangible aspects such as symbolic qualities and memories.

Interpretation may be a combination of the treatment of the fabric (e.g. maintenance, restoration, reconstruction); the use of and activities at the place; and the use of introduced explanatory material.

The traces of additions, alterations and earlier treatments to the fabric of a place are evidence of its history and uses which may be part of its significance. Conservation action should assist and not impede their understanding.

The use of modern materials and techniques must be supported by firm scientific evidence or by a body of experience.

Articles

Article 5. Values

- 5.1 *Conservation* of a *place* should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.
- 5.2 Relative degrees of *cultural significance* may lead to different *conservation* actions at a place.

Article 6. Burra Charter process

- 6.1 The *cultural significance* of a *place* and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy.
- 6.2 The policy for managing a place must be *based* on an understanding of its *cultural significance*.
- 6.3 Policy development should also include consideration of other factors affecting the future of a *place* such as the owner's needs, resources, external constraints and its physical condition.

Article 7. Use

- 7.1 Where the *use* of a place is of *cultural significance* it should be retained.
- 7.2 A *place* should have a *compatible* use.

Article 8. Setting

Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual *setting* and other relationships that contribute to the *cultural significance* of the *place*.

New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.

Explanatory Notes

Conservation of places with natural significance is explained in the Australian Natural Heritage Charter. This Charter defines natural significance to mean the importance of ecosystems, biological diversity and geodiversity for their existence value, or for present or future generations in terms of their scientific, social, aesthetic and life-support value.

A cautious approach is needed, as understanding of cultural significance may change. This article should not be used to justify actions which do not retain cultural significance.

The Burra Charter process, or sequence of investigations, decisions and actions, is illustrated in the accompanying flowchart.

The policy should identify a use or combination of uses or constraints on uses that retain the cultural significance of the place. New use of a place should involve minimal change, to significant fabric and use; should respect associations and meanings; and where appropriate should provide for continuation of practices which contribute to the cultural significance of the place.

Aspects of the visual setting may include use, siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and materials.

Other relationships, such as historical connections, may contribute to interpretation, appreciation, enjoyment or experience of the place.

Articles

Explanatory Notes

Article 9. Location

- 9.1 The physical location of a *place* is part of its *cultural significance*. A building, work or other component of a place should remain in its historical location. Relocation is generally unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival.
- 9.2 Some buildings, works or other components of *places* were designed to be readily removable or already have a history of relocation. Provided such buildings, works or other components do not have significant links with their present location, removal may be appropriate.
- 9.3 If any building, work or other component is moved, it should be moved to an appropriate location and given an appropriate use. Such action should not be to the detriment of any *place* of *cultural significance*.

Article 10. Contents

Contents, fixtures and objects which contribute to the *cultural significance* of a *place* should be retained at that place. Their removal is unacceptable unless it is: the sole means of ensuring their security and *preservation*; on a temporary basis for treatment or exhibition; for cultural reasons; for health and safety; or to protect the place. Such contents, fixtures and objects should be returned where circumstances permit and it is culturally appropriate.

Article 11. Related places and objects

The contribution which *related places* and *related objects* make to the *cultural significance* of the *place* should be retained.

Article 12. Participation

Conservation, interpretation and management of a *place* should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has special *associations* and *meanings*, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place.

Article 13. Co-existence of cultural values

Co-existence of cultural values should be recognised, respected and encouraged, especially in cases where they conflict.

For some places, conflicting cultural values may affect policy development and management decisions. In this article, the term cultural values refers to those beliefs which are important to a cultural group, including but not limited to political, religious, spiritual and moral beliefs. This is broader than values associated with cultural significance.

Conservation Processes

Article 14. Conservation processes

Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a *use*; retention of *associations* and *meanings*; *maintenance*, *preservation*, *restoration*, *reconstruction*, *adaptation* and *interpretation*; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

There may be circumstances where no action is required to achieve conservation.

Article 15. Change

- 15.1 Change may be necessary to retain *cultural significance*, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a *place* should be guided by the *cultural significance* of the place and its appropriate *interpretation*.
- 15.2 Changes which reduce *cultural significance* should be reversible, and be reversed when circumstances permit.
- 15.3 Demolition of significant *fabric* of a *place* is generally not acceptable. However, in some cases minor demolition may be appropriate as part of *conservation*. Removed significant fabric should be reinstated when circumstances permit.
- 15.4 The contributions of all aspects of *cultural significance* of a *place* should be respected. If a place includes *fabric*, *uses*, *associations* or *meanings* of different periods, or different aspects of cultural significance, emphasising or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasised or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.

When change is being considered, a range of options should be explored to seek the option which minimises the reduction of cultural significance.

Reversible changes should be considered temporary. Non-reversible change should only be used as a last resort and should not prevent future conservation action.

Article 16. Maintenance

Maintenance is fundamental to *conservation* and should be undertaken where *fabric* is of *cultural significance* and its maintenance is necessary to retain that *cultural significance*.

Articles

Article 17. Preservation

Preservation is appropriate where the existing *fabric* or its condition constitutes evidence of *cultural significance*, or where insufficient evidence is available to allow other *conservation* processes to be carried out.

Article 18. Restoration and reconstruction

Restoration and *reconstruction* should reveal culturally significant aspects of the *place*.

Article 19. Restoration

Restoration is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the *fabric*.

Article 20. Reconstruction

- 20.1 *Reconstruction* is appropriate only where a *place* is incomplete through damage or alteration, and only where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the *fabric*. In rare cases, reconstruction may also be appropriate as part of a use or practice that retains the *cultural significance* of the place.
- 20.2 *Reconstruction* should be identifiable on close inspection or through additional *interpretation*.

Article 21. Adaptation

- 21.1 *Adaptation* is acceptable only where the adaptation has minimal impact on the *cultural significance* of the place.
- 21.2 *Adaptation* should involve minimal change to significant fabric, achieved only after considering alternatives.

Article 22. New work

- 22.1 New work such as additions to the *place* may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the *cultural significance* of the place, or detract from its *interpretation* and appreciation.
- 22.2 New work should be readily identifiable as such.

Explanatory Notes

Preservation protects fabric without obscuring the evidence of its construction and use. The process should always be applied:

- where the evidence of the fabric is of such significance that it should not be altered;
- where insufficient investigation has been carried out to permit policy decisions to be taken in accord with Articles 26 to 28.

New work (e.g. stabilisation) may be carried out in association with preservation when its purpose is the physical protection of the fabric and when it is consistent with Article 22.

Adaptation may involve the introduction of new services, or a new use, or changes to safeguard the place.

New work may be sympathetic if its siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material are similar to the existing fabric, but imitation should be avoided.

Articles

Article 23. Conserving use

Continuing, modifying or reinstating a significant *use* may be appropriate and preferred forms of *conservation*.

Article 24. Retaining associations and meanings

- 24.1 Significant *associations* between people and a *place* should be respected, retained and not obscured. Opportunities for the *interpretation*, commemoration and celebration of these associations should be investigated and implemented.
- 24.2 Significant *meanings*, including spiritual values, of a *place* should be respected. Opportunities for the continuation or revival of these meanings should be investigated and implemented.

Article 25. Interpretation

The *cultural significance* of many places is not readily apparent, and should be explained by *interpretation*. Interpretation should enhance understanding and enjoyment, and be culturally appropriate.

Conservation Practice

Article 26. Applying the Burra Charter process

- 26.1 Work on a *place* should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.
- 26.2 Written statements of *cultural significance* and policy for the *place* should be prepared, justified and accompanied by supporting evidence. The statements of significance and policy should be incorporated into a management plan for the place.
- 26.3 Groups and individuals with *associations* with a place as well as those involved in its management should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in understanding the *cultural significance* of the place. Where appropriate they should also have opportunities to participate in its *conservation* and management.

Article 27. Managing change

- 27.1 The impact of proposed changes on the *cultural significance* of a *place* should be analysed with reference to the statement of significance and the policy for managing the place. It may be necessary to modify proposed changes following analysis to better retain cultural significance.
- 27.2 Existing *fabric*, *use*, *associations* and *meanings* should be adequately recorded before any changes are made to the *place*.

Explanatory Notes

These may require changes to significant fabric but they should be minimised. In some cases, continuing a significant use or practice may involve substantial new work.

For many places associations will be linked to use.

The results of studies should be up to date, regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.

Statements of significance and policy should be kept up to date by regular review and revision as necessary. The management plan may deal with other matters related to the management of the place.

Articles

Explanatory Notes

Article 28. Disturbance of fabric

- 28.1 Disturbance of significant *fabric* for study, or to obtain evidence, should be minimised. Study of a *place* by any disturbance of the fabric, including archaeological excavation, should only be undertaken to provide data essential for decisions on the *conservation* of the place, or to obtain important evidence about to be lost or made inaccessible.
- 28.2 Investigation of a *place* which requires disturbance of the *fabric*, apart from that necessary to make decisions, may be appropriate provided that it is consistent with the policy for the place. Such investigation should be based on important research questions which have potential to substantially add to knowledge, which cannot be answered in other ways and which minimises disturbance of significant fabric.

Article 29. Responsibility for decisions

The organisations and individuals responsible for management decisions should be named and specific responsibility taken for each such decision.

Article 30. Direction, supervision and implementation

Competent direction and supervision should be maintained at all stages, and any changes should be implemented by people with appropriate knowledge and skills.

Article 31. Documenting evidence and decisions

A log of new evidence and additional decisions should be kept.

Article 32. Records

- 32.1 The records associated with the *conservation* of a *place* should be placed in a permanent archive and made publicly available, subject to requirements of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.
- 32.2 Records about the history of a *place* should be protected and made publicly available, subject to requirements of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.

Article 33. Removed fabric

Significant *fabric* which has been removed from a *place* including contents, fixtures and objects, should be catalogued, and protected in accordance with its *cultural significance*.

Where possible and culturally appropriate, removed significant fabric including contents, fixtures and objects, should be kept at the place.

Article 34. Resources

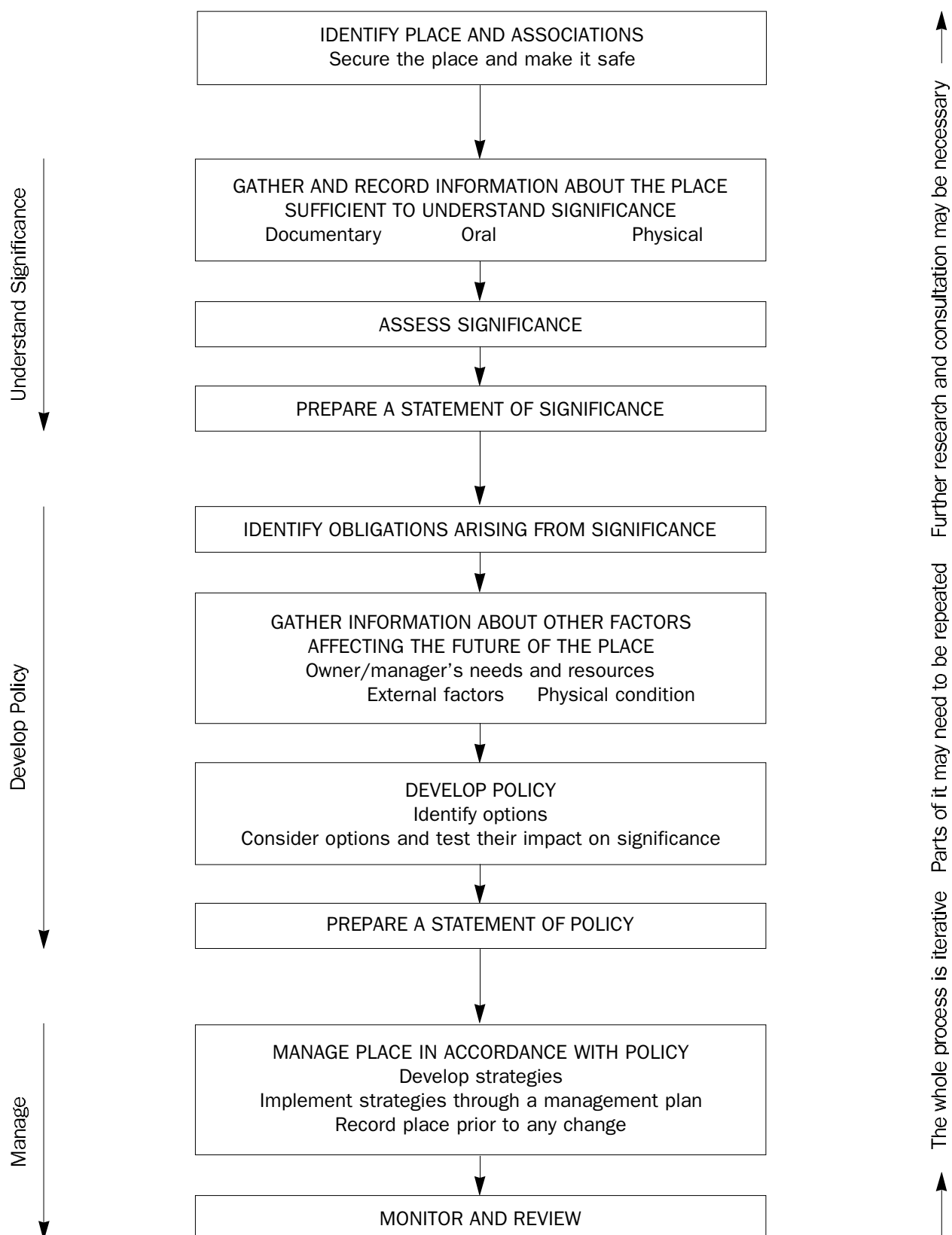
Adequate resources should be provided for conservation.

Words in italics are defined in Article 1.

The best conservation often involves the least work and can be inexpensive.

The Burra Charter Process

Sequence of investigations, decisions and actions



Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance

These guidelines for the establishment of cultural significance were adopted by the Australian national committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Australia ICOMOS) on 14 April 1984 and revised on 23 April 1988. They should be read in conjunction with the Burra Charter.

Contents

1.0 Preface

- 1.1 Intention of guidelines
- 1.2 Applicability
- 1.3 Need to establish cultural significance
- 1.4 Skills required
- 1.5 Issues not considered

2.0 The Concept of Cultural Significance

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Aesthetic value
- 2.3 Historic value
- 2.4 Scientific value
- 2.5 Social value
- 2.6 Other approaches

3.0 The Establishment of Cultural Significance

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Collection of information
- 3.3 The assessment of cultural significance
 - 3.3.1 Extent of recording
 - 3.3.2 Intervention in the fabric
 - 3.3.3 Hypotheses
- 3.4 Statement of cultural significance

4.0 The Report

- 4.1 Content
- 4.2 Written material
- 4.3 Graphic material
- 4.4 Sources
- 4.5 Exhibition and adoption

1.0 Preface

1.1 Intention of guidelines

These guidelines are intended to clarify the nature of professional work done within the terms of the Burra Charter. They recommend a methodical procedure for assessing the cultural significance of a place, for preparing a statement of cultural significance and for making such information publicly available.

1.2 Applicability

The guidelines apply to any place likely to be of cultural significance regardless of its type or size.

1.3 Need to establish cultural significance

The assessment of cultural significance and the preparation of a statement of cultural significance, embodied in a report as defined in section 4.0, are essential prerequisites to making decisions about the future of a place.

1.4 Skills required

In accordance with Article 4 of the Burra Charter, the study of a place should make use of all relevant disciplines. The professional skills required for such study are not common. It cannot be assumed that any one practitioner will have the full range of skills required to assess cultural significance and prepare a statement. Sometimes in the course of the task it will be necessary to engage additional practitioners with special expertise.

1.5 Issues not considered

The assessment of cultural significance and the preparation of a statement do not involve or take account of such issues as the necessity for conservation action, legal constraints, possible uses, structural stability or costs and returns. These issues will be dealt with in the development of a conservation policy.

2.0 The Concept of Cultural Significance

2.1 Introduction

In the Burra Charter cultural significance means “aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations”.

Cultural significance is a concept which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations.

Although there are a variety of adjectives used in definitions of cultural significance in Australia, the adjectives “aesthetic”, “historic”, “scientific” and “social”, given alphabetically in the Burra Charter, can encompass all other values.

The meaning of these terms in the context of cultural significance is discussed below. It should be noted that they are not mutually exclusive, for example, architectural style has both historic and aesthetic aspects.

2.2 Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value includes aspects of sensory perception for which criteria can and should be stated. Such criteria may include consideration of the form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric; the smells and sounds associated with the place and its use.

2.3 Historic value

Historic value encompasses the history of aesthetics, science and society, and therefore to a large extent underlies all of the terms set out in this section.

A place may have historic value because it has influenced, or has been influenced by, an historic figure, event, phase or activity. It may also have historic value as the site of an important event. For any given place the significance will be greater where evidence of the association or event survives in situ, or where the settings are substantially intact, than where it has been changed or evidence does not survive. However, some events or associations may be so important that the place retains significance regardless of subsequent treatment.

2.4 Scientific value

The scientific or research value of a place will depend on the importance of the data involved, on its rarity, quality or representativeness, and on the degree to which the place may contribute further substantial information.

2.5 Social value

Social value embraces the qualities for which a place has become a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment to a majority or minority group.

2.6 Other approaches

The categorisation into aesthetic, historic, scientific and social values is one approach to understanding the concept of cultural significance. However, more precise categories may be developed as understanding of a particular place increases.

3.0 The Establishment of Cultural Significance

3.1 Introduction

In establishing the cultural significance of a place it is necessary to assess all the information relevant to an understanding of the place and its fabric. The task includes a report comprising written material and graphic material. The contents of the report should be arranged to suit the place and the limitations on the task, but it will generally be in two sections: first, the assessment of cultural significance (see 3.2 and 3.3) and second, the statement of cultural significance (see 3.4).

3.2 Collection of information

Information relevant to the assessment of cultural significance should be collected. Such information concerns:

- (a) the developmental sequence of the place and its relationship to the surviving fabric;
- (b) the existence and nature of lost or obliterated fabric;
- (c) the rarity and/or technical interest of all or any part of the place;
- (d) the functions of the place and its parts;
- (e) the relationship of the place and its parts with its setting;
- (f) the cultural influences which have affected the form and fabric of the place;
- (g) the significance of the place to people who use or have used the place, or descendants of such people;
- (h) the historical content of the place with particular reference to the ways in which its fabric has been influenced by historical forces or has itself influenced the course of history;
- (i) the scientific or research potential of the place;
- (j) the relationship of the place to other places, for example in respect of design, technology, use, locality or origin;
- (k) any other factor relevant to an understanding of the place.

3.3 The assessment of cultural significance

The assessment of cultural significance follows the collection of information.

The validity of the judgements will depend upon the care with which the data is collected and the reasoning applied to it.

In assessing cultural significance the practitioner should state conclusions. Unresolved aspects should be identified.

Whatever may be considered the principal significance of a place, all other aspects of significance should be given consideration.

3.3.1 Extent of recording

In assessing these matters a practitioner should record the place sufficiently to provide a basis for the necessary discussion of the facts. During such recording any obviously urgent problems endangering the place, such as stability and security, should be reported to the client.

3.3.2 Intervention in the fabric

Intervention in, or removal of, fabric at this stage should be strictly within the terms of the Burra Charter.

3.3.3 Hypotheses

Hypotheses, however expert or informed, should not be presented as established fact. Feasible or possible hypotheses should be set out, with the evidence for and against them, and the line of reasoning that has been followed. Any attempt which has been made to check a hypothesis should be recorded, so as to avoid repeating fruitless research.

3.4 Statement of cultural significance

The practitioner should prepare a succinct statement of cultural significance, supported by, or cross referenced to, sufficient graphic material to help identify the fabric of cultural significance.

It is essential that the statement be clear and pithy, expressing simply why the place is of value but not restating the physical or documentary evidence.

4.0 The Report

4.1 Content

The report will comprise written and graphic material and will present an assessment of cultural significance and a statement of cultural significance.

In order to avoid unnecessary bulk, only material directly relevant to the process of assessing cultural significance and to making a statement of cultural significance should be included.

See also Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports.

4.2 Written material

The text should be clearly set out and easy to follow. In addition to the assessment and statement of cultural significance as set out in 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 it should include:

- (a) name of the client;
- (b) names of all the practitioners engaged in the task;
- (c) authorship of the report;
- (d) date;
- (e) brief or outline of brief;
- (f) constraints on the task, for example, time, money, expertise;
- (g) sources (see 4.4).

4.3 Graphic material

Graphic material may include maps, plans, drawings, diagrams, sketches, photographs and tables, and should be reproduced with sufficient quality for the purposes of interpretation.

All components discussed in the report should be identified in the graphic material. Such components should be identified and described in a schedule.

Detailed drawings may not be necessary. A diagram may best assist the purpose of the report.

Graphic material which does not serve a specific purpose should not be included.

4.4 Sources

All sources used in the report must be cited with sufficient precision to enable others to locate them.

It is necessary for all sources consulted to be listed, even if not cited.

All major sources or collections not consulted, but believed to have potential usefulness in establishing cultural significance should be listed.

In respect of source material privately held the name and address of the owner should be given, but only with the owner's consent.

4.5 Exhibition and adoption

The report should be exhibited and the statement of cultural significance adopted in accordance with Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports.

Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy

These guidelines, which cover the development of conservation policy and strategy for implementation of that policy, were adopted by the Australian national committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Australia ICOMOS) on 25 May 1985 and revised on 23 April 1988. They should be read in conjunction with the Burra Charter.

Contents

1.0 Preface

- 1.1 Intention of guidelines
- 1.2 Cultural significance
- 1.3 Need to develop conservation policy
- 1.4 Skills required

2.0 The Scope of the Conservation Policy

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Fabric and setting
- 2.3 Use
- 2.4 Interpretation
- 2.5 Management
- 2.6 Control of physical intervention in the fabric
- 2.7 Constraints on investigation
- 2.8 Future developments
- 2.9 Adoption and review

3.0 Development of Conservation Policy

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Collection of Information
 - 3.2.1 Significant fabric
 - 3.2.2 Client, owner and user requirements and resources
 - 3.2.3 Other requirements and concerns
 - 3.2.4 Condition of fabric
 - 3.2.5 Uses
 - 3.2.6 Comparative information
 - 3.2.7 Unavailable information
- 3.3 Assessment of information
- 3.4 Statement of conservation policy
- 3.5 Consequences of conservation policy

4.0 Implementation of Conservation Policy

5.0 The Report

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Written material
- 5.3 Graphic material
- 5.4 Sources
- 5.5 Exhibition and adoption

1.0 Preface

1.1 Intention of guidelines

These guidelines are intended to clarify the nature of professional work done within the terms of the Burra Charter. They recommend a methodical procedure for development of the conservation policy for a place, for the statement of conservation policy and for the strategy for the implementation of that policy.

1.2 Cultural significance

The establishment of cultural significance and the preparation of a statement of cultural significance are essential prerequisites to the development of a conservation policy (refer to Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance).

1.3 Need to develop conservation policy

The development of a conservation policy, embodied in a report as defined in Section 5.0, is an essential prerequisite to making decisions about the future of a place.

1.4 Skills required

In accordance with the Burra Charter, the study of a place should make use of all relevant disciplines. The professional skills required for such study are not common. It cannot be assumed that any one practitioner will have the full range of skills required to develop a conservation policy and prepare the appropriate report. In the course of the task it may be necessary to consult with other practitioners and organisations.

2.0 The Scope of the Conservation Policy

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the conservation policy is to state how the conservation of the place may best be achieved both in the long and short term. It will be specific to that place.

The conservation policy will include the issues listed below.

2.2 Fabric and setting

The conservation policy should identify the most appropriate way of caring for the fabric and setting of the place arising out of the statement of significance and other constraints. A specific combination of conservation actions should be identified. This may or may not involve changes to the fabric.

2.3 Use

The conservation policy should identify a use or combination of uses, or constraints on use, that are compatible with the retention of the cultural significance of the place and that are feasible.

2.4 Interpretation

The conservation policy should identify appropriate ways of making the significance of the place understood consistent with the retention of that significance. This may be a combination of the treatment of the fabric, the use of the place and the use of introduced interpretive material.

In some instances the cultural significance and other constraints may preclude the introduction of such uses and material.

2.5 Management

The conservation policy should identify a management structure through which the conservation policy is capable of being implemented. It should also identify:

- (a) those to be responsible for subsequent conservation and management decisions and for the day-to-day management of the place;
- (b) the mechanism by which these decisions are to be made and recorded;
- (c) the means of providing security and regular maintenance for the place.

2.6 Control of physical intervention in the fabric

The conservation policy should include provisions for the control of physical intervention. It may:

- (a) specify unavoidable intervention;
- (b) identify the likely impact of any intervention on the cultural significance;
- (c) specify the degree and nature of intervention acceptable for non-conservation purposes;
- (d) specify explicit research proposals;
- (e) specify how research proposals will be assessed;
- (f) provide for the conservation of significant fabric and contents removed from the place;
- (g) provide for the analysis of material;
- (h) provide for the dissemination of the resultant information;
- (i) specify the treatment of the site when the intervention is complete.

2.7 Constraints on investigation

The conservation policy should identify social, religious, legal or other cultural constraints which might limit the accessibility or investigation of the place.

2.8 Future developments

The conservation policy should set guidelines for future developments resulting from changing needs.

2.9 Adoption and review

The conservation policy should contain provision for adoption and review.

3.0 Development of Conservation Policy

3.1 Introduction

In developing a conservation policy for the place it is necessary to assess all the information relevant to the future care of the place and its fabric. Central to this task is the statement of cultural significance.

The task includes a report as set out in Section 5.0. The contents of the report should be arranged to suit the place and the limitations of the task, but it will generally be in three sections:

- (a) the development of a conservation policy (see 3.2 and 3.3);
- (b) the statement of conservation policy (see 3.4 and 3.5);

- (c) the development of an appropriate strategy for implementation of the conservation policy (see 4.0).

3.2 Collection of Information

In order to develop the conservation policy sufficient information relevant to the following should be collected:

3.2.1 Significant fabric

Establish or confirm the nature, extent, and degree of intactness of the significant fabric including contents (see Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance).

3.2.2 Client, owner and user requirements and resources

Investigate needs, aspirations, current proposals, available finances, etc., in respect of the place.

3.2.3 Other requirements and concerns

Investigate other requirements and concerns likely to affect the future of the place and its setting including:

- (a) federal, state and local government acts, ordinances and planning controls;
- (b) community needs and expectations;
- (c) locational and social context.

3.2.4 Condition of fabric

Survey the fabric sufficiently to establish how its physical state will affect options for the treatment of the fabric.

3.2.5 Uses

Collect information about uses, sufficient to determine whether or not such uses are compatible with the significance of the place and feasible.

3.2.6 Comparative information

Collect comparative information about the conservation of similar places (if appropriate).

3.2.7 Unavailable information

Identify information which has been sought and is unavailable and which may be critical to the determination of the conservation policy or to its implementation.

3.3 Assessment of information

The information gathered above should now be assessed in relation to the constraints arising from the statement of cultural significance for the purpose of developing a conservation policy.

In the course of the assessment it may be necessary to collect further information.

3.4 Statement of conservation policy

The practitioner should prepare a statement of conservation policy that addresses each of the issues listed in 2.0, viz.:

- fabric and setting;
- use;
- interpretation;
- management;
- control of intervention in the fabric;
- constraints on investigation;
- future developments;
- adoption and review.

The statement of conservation policy should be cross-referenced to sufficient documentary and graphic material to explain the issues considered.

3.5 Consequences of conservation policy

The practitioner should set out the way in which the implementation of the conservation policy will or will not:

- (a) change the place including its setting;
- (b) affect its significance;
- (c) affect the locality and its amenity;
- (d) affect the client owner and user;
- (e) affect others involved.

4.0 Implementation of Conservation Policy

Following the preparation of the conservation policy a strategy for its implementation should be prepared in consultation with the client. The strategy may include information about:

- (a) the financial resources to be used;
- (b) the technical and other staff to be used;
- (c) the sequence of events;
- (d) the timing of events;
- (e) the management structure.

The strategy should allow the implementation of the conservation policy under changing circumstances.

5.0 The Report

5.1 Introduction

The report is the vehicle through which the conservation policy is expressed, and upon which conservation action is based.

See also Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports.

5.2 Written material

Written material will include:

- (a) the statement of cultural significance;
- (b) the development of conservation policy;
- (c) the statement of conservation policy;
- (d) the strategy for implementation of conservation policy.

It should also include:

- (a) name of the client;
- (b) names of all the practitioners engaged in the task, the work they undertook, and any separate reports they prepared;
- (c) authorship of the report;
- (d) date;
- (e) brief or outline of brief;

- (f) constraints on the task, for example, time, money, expertise;
- (g) sources (see 5.4).

5.3 Graphic material

Graphic material may include maps, plans, drawings, diagrams, sketches, photographs and tables, clearly reproduced.

Material which does not serve a specific purpose should not be included.

5.4 Sources

All sources used in the report must be cited with sufficient precision to enable others to locate them.

All sources of information, both documentary and oral, consulted during the task should be listed, whether or not they proved fruitful.

In respect of source material privately held, the name and address of the owner should be given, but only with the owner's consent.

5.5 Exhibition and adoption

The report should be exhibited and the statement of conservation policy adopted in accordance with Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports.

Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports

These guidelines for the preparation of professional studies and reports were adopted by the Australian national committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Australia ICOMOS) on 23 April 1988. They should be read in conjunction with the Burra Charter.

Contents

1.0	Preface
2.0	Agreements between client and practitioner
3.0	Responsibility for content of report
4.0	Draft report
5.0	Urgent action
6.0	Additional work
7.0	Recommendations for further investigations
8.0	Exhibition and comment
9.0	Adoption and review of report
10.0	Further evidence
11.0	Accessibility of information

1.0 Preface

These guidelines make recommendations about professional practice in the preparation of the studies and reports within the terms of the Burra Charter.

Attention is also drawn to the advice about ethical, procedural and legal matters provided in the practice notes issued by various professional bodies.

2.0 Agreements between client and practitioner

Before undertaking a study or report, the client and the practitioner should agree upon:

- (a) the extent of the task, for example, up to the preparation of a statement of significance, up to the preparation of a statement of conservation policy or

up to the preparation of a strategy for implementation;

- (b) the boundaries of the place;
- (c) any aspect which requires intensive investigation;
- (d) the dates for the commencement of the task, submission of the draft report and submission of the final report;
- (e) the fee and basis upon which fees and disbursements will be paid;
- (f) the use of any joint consultant, sub-consultant or other practitioner with special expertise;
- (g) the basis for any further investigation which may be required, for example, within the terms of 7.0 below or Section 3.3 of Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy;
- (h) the representative of the client to whom the practitioner will be responsible in the course of the task;
- (i) the sources, material or services to be supplied by the client including previous studies or reports;
- (j) any requirements for the format or reproduction of the report;
- (k) the number of copies of the report to be supplied at each stage;
- (l) copyright and confidentiality;
- (m) how the authorship will be cited;
- (n) the condition under which the report may be published or distributed by the client, the practitioner or others;
- (o) the procedure for any required exhibition of the report;
- (p) the basis for comment upon the report and any consequent amendment;
- (q) the responsibility for affecting archival storage in accordance with Article 28 of the Burra Charter (Article 32 of the Burra Charter, 1999).

3.0 Responsibility for content of report

The content of the report is the responsibility of the practitioner. The report may not be amended without the agreement of the practitioner.

4.0 Draft report

It is useful for the report to be presented to the client in draft form to ensure that it is understood and so that the practitioner may receive the client's comments.

5.0 Urgent action

If the practitioner believes that urgent action may be necessary to avert a threat to the fabric involving, for example, stability or security, the practitioner should immediately advise the client to seek specialist advice.

6.0 Additional work

Where it becomes clear that some aspect of the task will require more investigation or more expertise than has been allowed within the budget or the terms of the agreement, the practitioner should advise the client immediately.

7.0 Recommendations for further investigations

In respect of major unresolved aspects of cultural significance, conservation policy or of strategies for implementation of conservation policy, recommendations for further investigation should be made only where:

- (a) the client has been informed of the need for such investigation at the appropriate stage and it has been impossible to have it undertaken within the budget and time constraints of the task;

- (b) further information is anticipated as a result of intervention in the fabric which would not be proper at this stage, but which will become appropriate in the future.

Such recommendations should indicate what aspects of cultural significance, conservation policy or implementation might be assisted by such study.

8.0 Exhibition and comment

The report for any project of public interest should be exhibited in order that interested bodies and the public may comment and reasonable time should be allowed for the receipt and consideration of comment. Where public exhibition is not appropriate, comment should be sought from relevant individuals, organisations and specialists.

9.0 Adoption and review of report

Recommendations should be made for the formal adoption of the report and for any subsequent review.

10.0 Further evidence

If after the completion of the report further evidence is revealed, for example, by intervention in the fabric or information from other sources, it is desirable for this evidence to be referred to the original practitioner so that the report may be amended if necessary.

11.0 Accessibility of information

All material relating to the cultural significance of the place should be made readily available to increase the common pool of knowledge. Publication by the client and/or practitioner should be encouraged.

Code on the Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places

(Adopted by Australia ICOMOS in 1998)

Preamble

This Code has been drafted in the context of several national and international agreements and statutes, such as:

- the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) 1981*, last revised 1988;
- the *Code of Ethics of the Australian Archaeological Association*, 1991;
- the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Australia);
- the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*;
- the UNESCO *Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation 1996*; and
- the UN Decade for the Cultural Development (1988-1997);

Assumptions

The Code assumes that:

- (i) the healthy management of cultural difference is the responsibility of society as a whole;
- (ii) in a pluralist society, value differences exist and contain the potential for conflict; and
- (iii) ethical practice is necessary for the just and effective management of places of diverse cultural significance.

Definitions

Article 1.

For the purpose of this Code:

- 1.1 *values* means those beliefs which have significance for a cultural group — often including, but not limited to, political, religious and spiritual, and moral beliefs;

- 1.2 *cultural group* means a group of people holding common values, expressed through the sharing of beliefs, traditions, customs and/or practice;
- 1.3 the *national estate* means ‘those places in the Australian environment which have aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or other special value for the present community and for future generations’;¹
- 1.4 *cultural significance* means ‘aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations’;²
- 1.5 *conflict* means a relationship in which ‘two or more parties perceive their values or needs to be incompatible’;³
- 1.6 *dispute* means a relationship in which two or more parties perceive their goals, interests or needs to be incompatible and in which each seeks to maximise fulfilment of its own goals, interests or needs; and
- 1.7 *conflict resolution*, as a generic term, includes the management of conflict through both mediated dispute settlement and the acceptance of value co-existence.

Ethical Principles

Article 2.

The co-existence of diverse cultures requires acknowledgment of the values of each group.

- 1 based on the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*, section 4
- 2 Australia ICOMOS, *Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter)*, Article 1.2
- 3 G Tillett, *Resolving Conflict*, 1991

Article 3.

Conserving the national estate requires acknowledgment of, and sensitivity to, the values of all associated cultural groups.

Article 4.

Each cultural group has a primary right to identify places of cultural significance to it and this right may include the withholding of certain information.

Article 5.

Each cultural group has the right of access to pertinent information and to any decision-making process affecting places it has identified as significant.

Article 6.

In identifying places of significance to it, a cultural group assumes some custodial responsibility towards those places.

Article 7.

In the case of indigenous peoples, and other peoples, the right to identify significant places may extend to the right to their full custodianship.

Ethical Practice

In assessing or managing a place of significance to different cultural groups, the practitioner shall:

Article 8.

adopt a co-ordinated multi-disciplinary approach to ensure an open attitude to cultural diversity and the availability of all necessary professional skills;

Article 9.

identify and acknowledge each associated cultural group and its values, while accepting the cultural right of groups to withhold certain information;

Article 10.

enable each cultural group to gain access to pertinent information and facilitate the exchange of information among groups;

Article 11.

enable each cultural group to gain access to, and inclusion and participation in, the decision-making processes which may affect the place;

Article 12.

apply a decision-making process which is appropriate to the principles of this Code;

This will include:

- co-responsibility among cultural groups for the assessment and management of the cultural significance of the place;
- accepted dispute settlement practices at each stage at which they are required; and
- adequate time to confer with all parties, including the least outspoken, and may require the amendment of existing procedures in conservation practice.

Article 13.

whilst seeking to identify issues and associated cultural groups at the beginning of the process, accept new issues and groups if they emerge and accommodate evolving positions and values;

Article 14.

where appropriate, seek co-existence of differing perceptions of cultural significance rather than resolution; and

Article 15.

accept compensation as a possible element in managing irreconcilable cultural difference.

Notes on the 1999 revisions to the Burra Charter

These notes are about the changes made in the 1999 revisions to the Burra Charter and are intended for those familiar with previous versions. They do not form part of the Charter.

Key changes

1. ***Fabric, Use, Associations and Meanings***

The revisions broaden the understanding of what is cultural significance by recognising that significance may lie in more than just the fabric of a place. Thus significance “is embodied in the place itself, its setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects” (Article 1.2). Use, associations and meanings are defined (Articles 1.10, 1.15 and 1.16) and the need to retain significant uses, associations and meanings is explained (Articles 7.1, 23 and 24). Related places and related objects are defined in Articles 1.13 and 1.14, and the need to retain their contribution to significance is explained in Article 11.

2. ***Planning process explained***

Article 6 and the flowchart now provide a clear explanation of the sequence of decisions and actions of the conservation planning process, namely:

- understand significance;
- develop policy;
- manage in accordance with the policy.

3. ***Peopling the Charter***

The way the Charter deals with social value has been improved (through the recognition that significance may be embodied in use, associations and meanings); spiritual value has been included (Article 1.2); and the need to consult and involve people has been made clear (Articles 12 and 26.3).

4. ***Co-existence of values***

The Charter encourages the co-existence of cultural values, especially where they conflict (Article 13).

5. ***Interpretation***

The revisions recognise the importance of interpretation and also that restoration and reconstruction are acts of interpretation (Articles 1.17 and 25).

6. ***Explanatory preamble***

The preamble has been enlarged to make the document more approachable, with sections on Who is the Charter for?, Using the Charter, and What places does the Charter apply to?

7. ***Why conserve***

A short statement in the preamble to provide some explanation for why places of cultural significance should be conserved.

8. ***Language***

Within the limits of retaining the ‘look and feel’ of the previous document, the revisions make the Charter longer, but easier to understand.

9. ***Heritage places should be conserved***

Changes to Article 2 provide an obligation to conserve and importantly, recognise that conservation is an integral part of good management.

10. ***The title***

The changes to the title reflect its common use and make the Charter applicable to all places of cultural significance, not just those that are being actively conserved.

Things that have not changed

The fundamental concepts of the Burra Charter have not changed. The 1999 revisions were made to bring the Charter up to date, not to change its essential message.

The 1999 revisions preserve the structure of previous versions. Following the Preamble there are three main sections: Conservation Principles, Conservation Processes and Conservation Practices. These have a hierarchy with principles in the first being further developed in the second or third sections: for example the higher order principle of Article 12 (Participation) is further developed in regard to practice in Article 26.3; Article 5.1 (Values) in Article 15.4; Article 6.1 (Process) in Articles 26.1, 26.2 and 26.3; and Article 10 (Contents) in Article 33.

Conversion table: Burra Charter, 1999 and previous version

This table relates article numbers and subjects in the current (1999) version of the Charter to those of the previous (1988) version. The table does not form part of the Charter.

1999	Subject	1988	1999	Subject	1988
1	Definitions	1		Conservation Processes	
1.1	<i>Place</i>	1.1	14	Conservation processes	1.4
1.2	<i>Cultural significance</i>	1.2	15	Change	16
1.3	<i>Fabric</i>	1.3	16	Maintenance	–
1.4	<i>Conservation</i>	1.4	17	Preservation	11
1.5	<i>Maintenance</i>	1.5	18	Restoration and reconstruction	14, 17
1.6	<i>Preservation</i>	1.6	19	Restoration	13
1.7	<i>Restoration</i>	1.7	20	Reconstruction	17–19
1.8	<i>Reconstruction</i>	1.8	21	Adaptation	20, 21
1.9	<i>Adaptation</i>	1.9	22	New work	–
1.10	<i>Use</i>	–	23	Conserving use	–
1.11	<i>Compatible use</i>	1.10	24	Retaining associations and meanings	–
1.12	<i>Setting</i>	–	25	Interpretation	–
1.13	<i>Related place</i>	–		Conservation Practice	
1.14	<i>Related object</i>	–	26	Applying the Burra Charter process	23, 25
1.15	<i>Associations</i>	–	27	Managing change	–
1.16	<i>Meanings</i>	–	28	Disturbance of fabric	24
1.17	<i>Interpretation</i>	–	29	Responsibility for decisions	26
	Conservation Principles		30	Direction, supervision and implementation	27
2	Conservation and management	2	31	Documenting evidence and decisions	27
3	Cautious approach	3	32	Records	28
4	Knowledge, skills and techniques	4	33	Removed fabric	29
5	Values	5	34	Resources	–
6	Burra Charter process	6			
7	Use	7			
8	Setting	8			
9	Location	9			
10	Contents	10			
11	Related places and objects	–			
12	Participation	–			
13	Co-existence of cultural values	–			

