

## AUSTRALIA

### Heritage Landscapes and Gardens

Australia is the only nation that is a continent, with a vast array of different topographies, and an incredible biological and ecological diversity. All landscapes are layered with cultural memory and meaning, and there is a dawning realisation that the whole of the Australian continent can be seen as a 'cultural landscape' - arising from the very long and intertwined history of interaction between people and the environment.

Australian landscapes are unique, resulting from 80 million years of evolution of the land and its flora and fauna since Gondwana separated, at least 60,000 years of Indigenous occupation and more than 200 years of European contact, cultural diversity and multiple and shared histories.

Some of these special characteristics are at risk, becoming less sustainable in the face of change, or through a lack of appreciation or adequate protection of their heritage values. In other cases, planning and land use processes are not sufficiently integrated to fully recognise all aspects of our heritage, thus placing at risk elements of heritage values - natural and cultural, Indigenous and settler - within the broader landscape.

Australia ICOMOS sees these as key issues for conservation philosophy and practice, and therefore welcomes their exploration through the scientific symposium planned for the 15<sup>th</sup> ICOMOS General Assembly, to be held in Xi'an, China in 2005. Particular concerns, examples and solutions are presented in our report below, as well as further reading, to broadly contribute to that discussion.

#### Issues

Cultural landscapes can be significant for their designed, evolved or associative values. They can include large areas of land - sometimes difficult to perceive as 'bounded' places.

Cultural landscapes can be linear in form (such as in the case of cultural routes, roads, song lines, waterways), and can be associated with significant intangible cultural heritage.

Importantly, landscapes provide the physical, visual and experiential/sensory *setting* of individual heritage places. Travelling through landscapes can be an important aspect of their significance. In many cases, the significance of landscapes can be inseparably linked with continuing cultural traditions - including land use practices, rural technologies, vernacular architecture, cultural concepts of time and space, the performing arts, religious observances, and so on.

Risks to heritage landscapes arise from some of their characteristics as heritage places:

- Landscapes are dynamic and it can be difficult to manage their complexity and ongoing evolution.
- Landscapes are affected by a diversity of pressures, often outcomes are the result of cumulative and/or interactive influences.
- Landscapes often consist of land in a variety of present-day land tenure arrangements - integrated approaches to protection and management can be difficult to achieve where there is a mixture of private and public owners and managers.
- Landscapes and their multiple values are managed through many activities undertaken by different levels of government - and by different agencies within each level of government - typically without sufficient coordination and shared values and priorities.
- Landscapes can be affected through the incremental impact of a

vast number of individual development approvals, occurring simultaneously at different levels of government, often without adequate coordination. In many of the most vulnerable areas - such as coastal landscapes within the urbanised east and south-east of the continent - the pace of change arising from multiple pressures is great.

- Landscapes currently suffer from a lack of broadly understood and applied methods for perceiving, valuing, and managing their heritage values. So, while there is a growing awareness of the importance of cultural landscapes within the community, and by heritage agencies, broad landscapes still tend to be in the 'too hard basket' in many instances.
- Landscapes - perhaps more than other heritage places - require the articulation of multiple narratives to be appropriately interpreted and celebrated.

In Australia, conservation practitioners have a wealth of experience of understanding and addressing these matters - at the global level (through for example the recognition of Uluru-KataTjuta as one of the first cultural landscapes recognised through the World Heritage Convention), and in local contexts. While there are many instances where excellent outcomes have occurred and best practice is being re-defined, it is also true that there are still many others where these factors present a considerable risk to the sustainability and viability of Australia's heritage.

This is a very broad theme for examining Heritage@Risk - a few examples have been selected to illustrate the issues, trends and potential solutions.

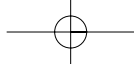
#### Drought, Fire and Climate Change

Throughout south-eastern Australia excessive drought believed to be related to global warming is having considerable impact on heritage gardens, avenues and landscapes. Impacts include loss of trees, increased vulnerability to bushfire, shortened life span of significant vegetation, and influences on planting choices in designed landscapes to incorporate new management regimes arising from water restrictions.

During the summer of 2002-2003, a vast area of south-eastern Australia was burned by wildfire, with the alpine region particularly affected. Loss of life and property was accompanied by significant losses of cultural and natural heritage. Again, in the summer of 2003-2004 bushfires affected areas of high conservation value - including Booderee National Park on the coast, with the loss of many trees and other vegetation.

Environmental change is insidious and is expected to ultimately have a considerable impact on significant landscapes and heritage settings. Because of this dilemma the 2004 national conference of the Australian Garden History Society was devoted to this topic - *Browned Off: Old Gardens in a New World*, held in Sydney in October, 2004 (see [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/)).

An example relates to Australia's unique and valued garden suburbs. The city of Canberra - Australia's federal capital - is a planned Garden City. Canberra was extensively planted with exotic trees and bushes, and is famous for its colourful spring and autumn, in a landscape otherwise typically eucalypt grey-green. Within this landscape, long-term water restrictions are having an impact on street trees. There are discussions about possibly replac-



York Park historic oak trees,  
Canberra, Australia (photo: Duncan  
Marshall)



York Park historic oak trees,  
Canberra, Australia, damaged by  
parking (photo: Duncan Marshall)



Bells Beach, near Torquay, Victoria  
– part of Australia's highly valued  
coastal landscapes. Included in the  
Victorian Heritage Register because  
of its iconic status within the  
history of the development of  
surfing in Australia (photo: Heritage  
Victoria)



ing the northern hemisphere deciduous trees with native species, so changing the entire look of the city.

Perhaps it was not this issue that was primarily a factor in a recent case threatening a copse of oak trees in Canberra, but certainly their bedraggled and drought-parched appearance did not help. The York Park Plantation is a small plantation of English Oak (*Quercus robur*) trees in Central Canberra. It has been included in the Commonwealth Heritage List, and has well-documented associations with the visit to Canberra by the Duke of York in 1927 for the opening of the new Parliament House. Although some trees have died, the plantation is intact.

In 2004, the National Trust included York Park in its *Endangered Places List* due to a proposed office and car park development. Intense lobbying by many people and community-based heritage groups such as the Australian Garden History Society and the National Trust of Australia has put the development proposal on hold. There is a current commitment to move the boundary of the car park to prevent further compaction under the trees, removal of invasive weed species, and appropriate tree pruning. Nonetheless, the case illustrates the vulnerability of our listed landscape heritage places.

### Changes in garden 'fashion'

Whilst drought has hastened 'hard-landscaping' trends in gardens, with many areas of grass now being paved, such changes sit within a broader international shift to a more formal garden style, with regular paving and rigid furniture structures. This fashion can impact on heritage gardens.

The heritage-listed Old Parliament House Rose Gardens occupy a prominent and strategic location at the southern end of the main Land Axis of Walter Burley Griffin's design for Australia's federal capital city of Canberra. The Gardens have been recently redeveloped.

The new works included the removal of approximately 600 historic roses, in favour of hybrid varieties and inserted a new hard-edged style, currently in vogue and quite out of keeping with the original design of enclosed gardens reflecting an Edwardian garden style.

These works have seriously impacted upon the heritage integrity of the existing heritage precinct. This took place despite protests by heritage experts to the Canberra planning authority. The former value of the Gardens as an integral part of the design and use of Old Parliament House has been lost, and their potential to be acclaimed as major integral component of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century group of features in the Parliamentary Triangle has also been lost.

As well, the new and altered appearance of the Gardens has had an impact on their importance in providing the setting for Old Parliament House, and on the vistas that comprise the significant Parliamentary Triangle landscape.

### Urban Expansion and Rural Landscapes

In Australia, a major risk to rural cultural landscapes in some regions is urban 'sprawl' arising from the accommodation of population growth on the low-density fringes of major metropolitan areas.

In Sydney, planning processes for growth have the potential to rapidly and dramatically change the character of areas known for their 'colonial landscape' values. Properties in these areas were manifest in a distinct style, derived from British 18<sup>th</sup> century pastoral landscapes.

The 2001 Australian State of the Environment report refers to the Southern Highlands region of NSW, where accelerated urban development is a potential risk to the modern-day 'hill station' character of the area. In recognition of these issues, and in response to related community concerns, the Wingecarribbee Shire conducted a study of historic rural landscapes during the 1990s. The study resulted in the establishment of landscape protection zones within the planning scheme, which has facilitated the retention of landscape integrity and created a synergy with policies to protect rural lands from fragmentation.

### Coastal Landscapes

In many regions, community perceptions suggest that coastal landscapes are subject to risks through rapid changes in land use. Pressures on coastal environments are particularly evident in those regions close to major population centres. Risks to the heritage values of coastal environments are many, and include the individual and cumulative effects of:

- increased urbanisation in coastal areas (arising from the demand for seaside holiday houses/'weekenders', and through demographic change as more city dwellers and retirees seek lifestyle change through movement to coastal areas – the 'seachange' phenomenon);
- developments for recreation and tourism – including resort developments, golf courses;
- pressures for increased road capacity in scenic coastal areas;
- redevelopment of maritime infrastructure to enable Australian seaports to remain competitive within global transport markets;
- Increased erosion, storm damage and the other effects of climate change.

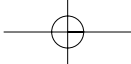
Another land use conflict in coastal areas has involved the energy sector, and the drive for improved energy efficiency and Government commitments to increase the provision of energy from sustainable and renewable sources.

The rapid uptake of wind energy in Australia is causing a major impact on valued landscapes in rural areas, particularly valued coastal areas of Australia. Wind farm installations have become a major community area of concern and protest. Not all wind farm developments occur in coastal areas – their placement and viability vary substantially – although those occurring in coastal areas seem to be particularly contentious.

Best practice standards have been set for the installation of wind farms with regard to general planning, visual impacts and some natural conservation considerations. However, a thorough investigation of landscape values that includes historic, social and aesthetic heritage values of landscapes was not part of the planning requirements.

Natural and cultural heritage therefore feature prominently in the language of this debate, and there is a lack of consistent and agreed approaches to landscape assessment – both at the strategic planning stage, and in relation to the siting and design of individual developments.

In recognition of this gap, a joint initiative of the Australian Wind Energy Association and the Australian Council of National Trusts has been supported by the Australian Greenhouse Office and the Heritage Division of the Department of the Environment and Heritage. While the project is still in its first stage, the aim is to develop a best practice national approach which has the agreement of the industry and heritage organisations. (see [www.nationaltrust.org.au/media\\_whats\\_new.htm](http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/media_whats_new.htm))



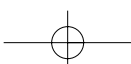
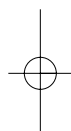
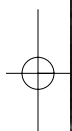
Wind Farm near Codrington in Western Victoria  
(photo: Codrington Wind Farm Tours <http://www.myportfairy.com/windfartours>)



Wonnangatta Station



Historical Plan of Glenrowan  
(photo: Heritage Victoria)



## Cultural or Natural?

Australia still suffers from a fragmentation of the protection of its natural and cultural heritage. Despite some excellent work in recent years on the integrated recognition of the values of landscapes, in the minds of many communities and government authorities, there is a persistent separation of Indigenous, post-contact ('historic') and natural places and values. This makes for cumbersome decision-making, and too often a 'dots on the map' approach to heritage listing and conservation.

An example of this divided approach is the tendency for national parks policies to require removal of exotic vegetation, and/or revegetation using native species, often without adequate assessment of the cultural values of the exotic plantings. This can result in the unintended and unrecognised loss of cultural heritage value within these layered landscapes.

This separation between natural and cultural heritage identification, protection and management has long been an issue within Australian land and heritage management. This occurs despite the fact that Indigenous people consider that cultural and natural landscapes are one and the same, and are indivisible. In many parts of Australia Indigenous people have an increasing role in owning and/or jointly managing national parks.

Recognising that 'natural areas' and 'wilderness' can and frequently do have important and under-recognised cultural heritage values has been promoted through various projects by Australia ICOMOS, including a major report with case studies. Another important initiative is the work by the Australian Heritage Council on the heritage values of 'inspirational landscapes', which is currently in its 2<sup>nd</sup> stage.

Transcending the artificial classifications of 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage within the landscape is therefore an important and long-standing challenge in Australia. At the start of 2004, a new and significantly different national heritage system commenced operation in Australia. One of the features of this new system is to include Australia's natural and cultural heritage within the definition of the 'environment' in the amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. It is still too early to anticipate the impacts of this new national heritage system.

## Setting

Landscapes function to provide the settings for important heritage places, and provide meaningful links between them. Settings are often not recognised as forming part of the values of heritage places, and protection measures are not well developed and inconsistently applied. Development approval processes often do not or cannot legally consider the broader landscape, linkages, setting or streetscape. Damage to heritage places and values can occur through attrition in such cases. This has long been recognised in Australia, but change to laws and systems can take time.

For many designed landscapes, capturing views, enframing vistas and incorporating borrowed scenery is an inherent component of the design. Many significant gardens not only capture significant views, but are themselves significant vista features – as silhouettes, for their visibility in different lights, and for different seasonal colours.

The landscape setting frequently provides an evocative journey to a heritage place – including places in urban, rural and 'natural' contexts. Climbing a mountain to a spectacular scenic viewpoint, to a Buddhist cave complex, or an historic pagoda are essential components of the experience of the place. Similarly, approaching

a grand building along a major avenue, or approaching a historic house through historic laneways are significant aspects of the heritage values of these places. These include intangible and ephemeral elements – sounds and smells, light, shadow, bird life and plant details, 'empty' space, the textures of the surrounding environment.

Recognition of the heritage values of the setting also involves perceiving the patterns of settlement and the linkages between individual elements.

An example is Port Macquarie, NSW, where local planning instruments have no capacity to manage the archaeological remains of the historic convict-era penal settlement as a whole, no respect for the original street grid and town precincts, no willingness to use the original town layout as a starting point for new design. This important penal landscape is therefore masked and at considerable risk. This threat demonstrates the inadequate protection not only at the local level, but also through broad scale strategic planning and urban design processes. These often look only at individual sites in isolation, rather than perceiving the links and connections that often exist between them.

## Intangible Heritage Values

Another major lack in most heritage planning processes and structures is considerable of intangible heritage values. This is despite changes to the national heritage standard, the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter*, which articulated these meanings and associations with place – 'social value' – more strongly. Many people working within the development industries, and in approvals agencies are still unaware of this facet of the heritage process, and do not have the tools or skills to undertake community consultation about intangible values and what impacts a development may have on them.

An example of a place with important intangible heritage values is the landscape associated with one of Australia's best-known folk heroes, Ned Kelly, a 19<sup>th</sup> century 'bush-ranger' (road bandit). This story has substantial cultural resonance for most Australians. One of the most evocative places in the stories about Ned Kelly is the 'siege' site in the town of Glenrowan where Ned was captured following a lengthy gun battle with the Police. Today there are almost no 'tangible' heritage elements associated with the siege, other than the broad lay-out of the landscape, including the sight lines between key points in the drama. Glenrowan, a small town, on the main north-south highway between Australia's two cities is working to build its image, distinctive character and economic prosperity on its associations with this story – the mythic subject of many films, books, ballads and fine art.

## Understanding Indigenous Concepts of 'Country'

Indigenous concepts of 'country' and the rich cultural meanings embodied in the landscape are the basis for approaches to management of cultural heritage. This is illustrated through many examples – and in relation to the diversity of Indigenous cultural groups throughout the continent, living in many different social, cultural and environmental contexts.

One example of the breadth of the implications of embracing this landscape-based approach can be seen in the communiqué from the Indigenous participants to the *Celebrating Mountains* conference held in 2002 by the Australian Alps National Parks, in partnership with Australia ICOMOS.

The broad set of recommendations include commentary on the

inappropriate categorisation of 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage, access to country and to traditional plant and animal resources, place names, control of knowledge and intellectual property, interpretation, joint management, training and employment, and more.

Whilst such Indigenous cultural connections are better recognised by most Australians for 'traditional' Aboriginal people in the deserts and tropics of Australia's centre and north, it is still relatively rare in the south-east with longer and denser European settlement and a greater disruption between the past and present. Exceptions are occurring increasingly with a growing understanding of a strong cultural continuity demanding recognition. This is taking place, for example in the hand-back of national parks on the South Coast of NSW, where two sacred mountains, Biamanga (Mumbulla Mountain, and Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) are in the process of being returned to the Yuin people. Many Indigenous communities are taking greater control of decisions about their heritage place, being included in that process by changes to legislation, as well as receiving grants to conserve and develop them for cultural tourism. This is generally done in a way that integrates the site with its setting and the surrounding landscape, interpreting it and its meaning as well as for example, the traditional food and medicine plants.

## Conclusion

It is likely that adoption of a holistic landscape approach will have benefits for understanding, conserving and interpreting all of Australia's heritage and appropriately perceiving heritage places within their settings.

*It might be useful to draw more on the 'cultural landscape' way of thinking... The concept of cultural landscapes is a means of integrating, for any one place, aspects of natural, Indigenous and historic, aesthetic, scientific and social heritage values. It also makes us realise that the actual 'places' we have identified only represent selected concentrations of meaning or significance in a wider intellectual and cultural landscape context. Without a full appreciation of the heritage values of a cultural landscape the individual physical places within it could have no meaning.* (Lennon et al 2001, p. 14)

It is hoped that heritage conservation in Australia will benefit through the insights gained from drawing on the multi-layered

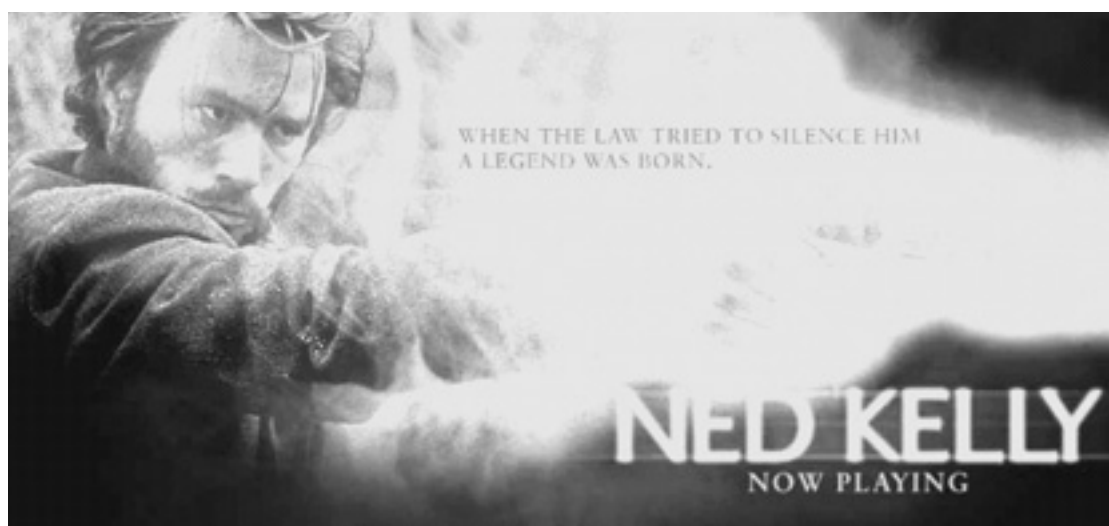
landscapes that surround us. As the above issues demonstrate we have some way to go.

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## Australia ICOMOS

Authorship: This entry was prepared for Australia ICOMOS by Marilyn Truscott, Juliet Ramsay and Kristal Buckley, with input from Jane Lennon, members of Australia ICOMOS, and its Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes Reference Group.



Advertising for the Universal Studios movie 'Ned Kelly' (2003), starring Heath Ledger, Orlando Bloom, Geoffrey Rush and Naomi Watts