

UNESCO did sponsor a regional conference on historic places in Sydney in May 1983 and the proceedings were published as a 250 pp. volume entitled, *Protecting the Past for the Future*. However none of the 12 recommendations have been followed through, especially those relating to regional co-operation in sharing of conservation technology and future regional conferences where UNESCO was asked to resolve any breakdown in arrangements!

UNESCO has sponsored regional conferences in Asia but Australia ICOMOS was only formally invited in 1988, to send one representative to participate in a seminar in Japan. Several of our members attended the 1987 Heritage of Asia and Pacific Islands (HAPI) conference in Hawaii and there was a plea from representatives of the smaller countries to provide low cost conservation solutions to assist them. There are 10,000 Chinesees studying in Australia so there is potential for developing professional contacts for those trained here and practising conservation of monuments and places of cultural significance in their own countries.

However the existing regional representation on ICOMOS international and its related UNESCO committees is not working. We have had no feedback or personal communication with our representative since he was appointed following the last General Assembly in Washington, D.C. in 1987.

2.5 Recommendation for consideration at the Lausanne General Assembly:

In order to advance the objectives of ICOMOS internationally we recommend that:

- an executive director of ICOMOS be appointed with appropriate support staff;
- regional meetings of ICOMOS national committees be held annually to bring recommendations to international ICOMOS, in our case from the Asia/Pacific region;
- the international expert committees of ICOMOS be reviewed and restructured so that each national committee has accountable, effective participation.

Despite the current lack of resources, we believe that ICOMOS internationally could have better communications if the Secretariat were more willing and able to harness UNESCO administrative support.

3 THE VENICE CHARTER AND THE BURRA CHARTER

The Venice Charter, drafted in 1964, has become a keystone in international thinking on conservation. Much of it is generalized and imprecise, but it does incorporate important ideas like respect for authentic evidence and for the integrity of the building or site. One of its most important concepts is that of anastylosis, and this best exemplifies the European nature of the conservation philosophy as anastylosis literally means, «raising the columns» and this is the procedure adopted by archaeologists in dealing with the ruins of classical temples and similar monuments.

3.1 Use of the Venice Charter in Australia

The Charter was virtually unknown in Australia in the early 1970s except to a handful of materials conservators in art galleries and architects, knowledge of restoration debate in places like Venice. Its concepts seemed totally foreign.

How do we apply anastylosis to the conservation of thatched roof, or of a mud wall which has crumbled away in the rain? Likewise the term «monument» in the title of the International Council on Monuments and Sites immediately evokes classical temples and Gothic cathedrals. Although it applies equally well to a Hindu or Buddhist temple, it does not seem appropriate to a mud hut or the remains of a village pottery, or to a whole village or urban area.

The Venice Charter is not well suited to dealing with vernacular or primitive buildings, urban conservation areas, industrial archaeological sites or twentieth century buildings. These types constitute the bulk of Australian cultural property so we felt the need to prepare our own document to clarify and expand the Venice Charter particularly in relation to the conservation issues which faced us here.

3.2 The Burra Charter and its development

In February 1979 Australia ICOMOS formed a committee to adapt the Venice Charter to Australian conditions. It included three architects, an archaeologist and a specialist in conservation method and was strengthened by the addition of a solicitor with experience in drafting legislation for conservation. To make funding for meetings possible all participants were made members of the Australian Heritage Commission Technical Advisory Committee and the actual meetings were held under its patronage.

The principles of the Charter were drafted in two exhausting sessions of two days each and the draft was published and circulated to all members of Australia ICOMOS for comment before the August meeting at Burra Burra. General discussion at this meeting resulted in a number of improving amendments and the document was formally adopted for a trial period of a year. Fifteen months later a similar process was followed and minor amendments which arose from the experience of members in implementing the document were incorporated.

In organisational terms it was successful because momentum was never lost and all members of ICOMOS were aware of what was going on and could be involved. The momentum was maintained because of the assistance of the Australian Heritage Commission and without this, it would have been a more agonising and less certain project.

The major ideas behind the drafting of the Burra Charter were:

Firstly, an acceptance of the general philosophy of the Venice Charter.

Secondly, the need for a common conservation language throughout Australia.

Thirdly, an emphasis on the need for a thorough understanding of the significance of a place before the policy decisions can be made.

Fourthly, an approach more flexible and practical than is suggested by the Venice Charter, and one which could cope with the realities of Australia's heritage, and in particular which would permit the stringency of conservation processes to be varied according to the nature of significance.

Fifthly, that technical words or jargon be avoided and that where this was not possible, as in the types of conservation processes, definitions be inserted.

Sixthly, that a neutral or multidisciplinary approach be adopted which would avoid defining the fields of architects, engineers, archaeologists, historians etc. and use instead terms like «place» and «work».

The key difference between the Charters is that the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS is applied to all places of cultural significance, not just architectural monuments as in the Venice Charter. The term «place» includes archaeological sites, ruins, buildings, engineering structures, groups of buildings and whole urban areas; «cultural significance» includes all the reasons why we try to preserve places — aesthetic, historic, scientific and social value.

3.3 Guidelines to the Burra Charter

Following the adoption of the Charter, Australia ICOMOS undertook a second stage and developed a series of guidelines which amplify aspects of the Burra Charter.

The first guidelines related to the establishment of cultural significance and recommended a methodological procedure for assessing the cultural significance of a place, for preparing a statement of cultural significance and for making such information publically available. (See Appendix 1). They were adopted in 1984 and revised in 1988.

The second guidelines related to the development of conservation policy for a place of cultural significance and a strategy for the implementation of that policy for a place of cultural significance and a strategy for the implementation of that policy. The policy addresses issues such as the necessity for conservation action, legal constraints, possible uses, structural stability, costs and returns. These guidelines were adopted in 1985.

The third guidelines makes recommendation 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. These guidelines were adopted in 1988.

All the guidelines have functioned as an aide memoire to practitioners and explain the process to those unfamiliar with conservation practice.

3.4 The Burra Charter in use

Because the Charter was produced at a time of considerable need it has had a surprising degree of acceptance by national and many State government departments. Most public works departments have formally endorsed the Charter as a condition of membership of Australia ICOMOS.

Both national and State government grants for works to places of cultural significance are given subject to the works being carried out in accordance with the principle and procedures of the Burra Charter. Hence the Charter is almost universally accepted in Australia, in word if not always in deed. There have been major public debates reported in the media about varying interpretations of urban conservation work and whether it was carried out in strict accordance with the provisions of the Burra Charter. But it should be emphasised that the Charter has been written as a set of principles to help in the decision-making processes. It is not suited to statutory enforcement.

The name of the Charter has also led to puns, for example, the penguin burrow charter for coastal works. This joking is a sure sign of acceptance by Australians!

Most National Trusts and historical societies and local government authorities or municipalities now understand that restoration works must be preceded by a conservation analysis and this has led to a greater expansion of work for the heritage conservation profession. Most restoration work involves an element of reconstruction because it usually involves the introduction of some new materials. Even the reassembly of displaced elements (anastylosis) naturally requires new elements. The majority of building conservation work in Australia involves a substantial amount of adaptation. This is acceptable where the conservation of a place cannot otherwise be achieved, and where the adaptation does not substantially detract from its cultural significance (See Article 20 of the Burra Charter).

3.5 Use in other countries

The Burra Charter is known and used in other countries because of personal contacts, for example, in Chile, Canada, Zambia, New Zealand, Fiji and Indonesia. Most practitioners have reported following the processes, even if not using the terminology.

3.6 Recommendations for consideration at the Lausanne General Assembly

In order to advance the objectives of ICOMOS internationally we recommend that:

- no more charters be developed but that as the conservation planning process outlined in our Burra Charter and tested over the last ten years is universally applicable, that this should be incorporated into the revised international charter of ICOMOS (the Lausanne Charter updated to replace the Venice Charter?);
- a Charter, or local variant should be adopted by governments for all public works contracts;
- the promulgation of the principles of the conservation process should be improved, for example, through an illustrated document to act as a «field» guide.

4 EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

4.1 Development of skills in Australia

Australia ICOMOS developed in the 1970s at a time when the embryonic cultural heritage conservation movement started its quickening to the major political position it occupies today.

There has been an explosion of popular interest in Australian heritage. Australians learn about their history and cultural heritage from film and television, from walking through historic districts or precincts looking at museums and restored buildings. The tourist brochure and the restored streetscape shape dominant images of our past.

A string of official commemorations has added to this mounting interest. The Bicentennial Year of 1988 followed a run of State commemorations. A genuine local interest in one's own commu-