Your solution, their problem. Their solution, your problem:
The Gordian Knot of Cultural Heritage Planning and Management at the Local Government Level

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage management is, in essence, a facet of social engineering, whereby physical remains of the past (and present) are selectively preserved pandering to values currently held by the population at large. Indeed, mid- and long-term protection of heritage places can only occur if such places are ‘embraced’ or ‘owned’ by the community. However, public opinion, often coloured by nostalgia, omits, consciously or subconsciously, places that do not fit the present value system. Thus, inevitably there are places, which may be identified by expert opinion, that need to be preserved even if a community is apathetic or even antagonistic. Such differences of opinion allow for conflict to occur. Local planning and the implementation of planning priorities is inevitably caught up in it. The political dimension at the LGA level further complicates matters, particularly as we move from one heritage to a multitude of ‘heritages.’

Over the past decade the management of cultural heritage matters at the local government level has seen the decline of top-down, expert-driven studies, while bottom-up, community-driven, or at least community influenced, studies have increased. Both approaches have their failings and lead to gaps in the record.

Furthermore, all too often heritage plans are limited. Great effort is expended focussing on the historic trends and themes of an area, and on inventorising, evaluating and listing of places deemed worth protecting. Yet next to no effort is spent on implementation strategies, ranging from capacity building within the administering local government to education of property owners, wider stakeholders, the public resident in the LGA and outside visitors.

This paper discusses the pitfalls inherent in these various planning approaches and outlines strategies for LGA-level planning and management to maximise returns from heritage planning projects.
INTRODUCTION

What is cultural heritage? Paraphrasing the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 1999), cultural heritage is the collective set of places valued by a community that enrich people’s lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. Therefore, cultural heritage management is, in essence, a facet of social management, whereby physical remains of the past (and present) are selectively preserved reflecting values currently held by the community at large. In theory these remains are identified and assessed by a range of practitioners in collaboration and consultation with the affected community. Community-involvement in the process has long been recognised as crucial as mid- and long-term protection of heritage places can only occur if such places are ‘embraced’ or ‘owned’ by the community. It is the level and nature of community involvement in that process, however, that causes problems for heritage planners. As always there are two diametrically opposed solutions, top-down expert-driven studies, and bottom-up community-driven studies. An expert-driven approach tends to underestimate places important to the community favouring (types of) places the expert(s) are comfortable working with, while a community-driven approach tends to favour ‘popular’ places and overlooks or even actively ignores places that do not fit the community mould. As the title suggests, both cause problems for the other side and the Local Government Authority (LGA) is forced to deal with it in day-to-day management.

In the following we will discuss some aspects of expert versus community approaches and will outline the inherent pitfalls. We will then address issues of evaluation, in particular the mutability of heritage values ascribed to places and look at processes how of to deal with places that are not yet, but could be identified as significant. In the final part of the paper we will look at some key aspects lacking in local heritage management plans and will outline how future plans could be shaped.

TRADITIONAL EXPERT-DRIVEN APPROACHES

The historic foundation of the heritage movement in Australia was rooted in the interests of archaeologists, architects and historians, who sought to preserve parts of Australia’s heritage for future generations, for archival and demonstration purposes, or for reasons of future scientific investigations (Davison 1991, Smith 1996). Not surprisingly, then, heritage studies were traditionally carried out by a team of specialists drawn from these disciplines. A study of 72 heritage studies completed between 1992 and 1999 NSW LGAs showed that 33.9% of all authors and co-authors of heritage plans were architects, 19.7% historians and 18.5% were archaeologists (Canning & Spennemann 2001). The standard heritage study of the 1970s and 1980s would see a small team of specialists descend upon a community and study its history as reflected in its architectural presence. Places were selected for protection based on historic relevance, architectural importance and aesthetic appeal. Consultation tended to be limited people seen as knowledgeable in the history of the area and vociferous stakeholder groups, such as the historic societies.

During the 1970s and 1980s there was little doubt that experts were afforded the authority to pontificate on matters within their purview. After all, he/she had studied the subject matter and thus was qualified to comment, while the average citizen as lay-person was not. Increased levels of tertiary education, coupled with an increasing environmental consciousness and an increased level of community involvement in other land management issues (eg LandCare), saw the wider community assert its authority to speak on matters of cultural heritage. After all, it was their past and their identity that was being decided on. In that regard, the empowerment of the Indigenous Australians to increasingly influence the destiny of their own heritage can not be underrated as a stimulus.

COMMUNITY STUDIES

During the 1990s attempts were made to widen the involvement of the community in decision making processes. The role of the heritage planner has increasingly become reduced to that of a
facilitator, conducting community workshops and juggling their outcomes with the opinions of specialists in the fields of archaeology and history.

Even though such approaches are community-focused and on occasion community-driven, the authority commissioning the plan influences the plan outcomes through the phrasing of the terms of reference (including stipulating who should be regarded as a stakeholder) and through the level of funding allocated to conduct of the study, which directly translates into the time consultants can spend on the matter. Such time constraints tend to confine any detailed analysis of values that can be carried out, given competing requirements of survey, historical analysis and developing management prescriptions; as a direct result, much assessment is still based on consultation with individual community members deemed knowledgeable (Pockock 2002) and, from the perspective of ‘veracity’ of information, deemed reliable.

Modern heritage management plan development, still controlled by an expert as facilitator, draws on a small group of stakeholders through formal responses to draft documents, through direct one-on-one consultation with individuals or groups, through selected focus groups or through more openly-structured community workshops. Large-scale community meetings have also been held. Community-driven or community-controlled heritage studies, such as those developed in NSW (NSW Heritage 2001c), place community members in control, who, assisted by a project manager, and assisted by historic theme studies compiled by a professional historian, select heritage places deemed worthy of preservation. In the NSW scenario, sites outside the predefined historic thematic framework are prone to be overlooked, either consciously or subconsciously (assumed to be outside the parameters) unless the lay committee is prepared to argue the case.

Unless the commissioning authority specifically requests the inclusion (or exclusion) of specific stakeholders, the stakeholder selection will be driven by individual responses to public advertisements and calls for expression of interest. This means that self-nomination is encouraged, which will cause the process to be dominated by self-interest groups who may not be representative of the population at large. Historic societies who are usually included as a key stakeholder in any heritage identification process, yet considering both the age structure and ethnicity of most historic societies they are not representative of the population. Nevertheless they are attributed a high veracity value by the public at large and by the LGAs.

Heritage and cultural values are inherently a personal matter with values varying in nature and level of conviction from one individual to another (see below). Even though the composition of focus groups, community reference panels and the like is meant to be representative of the views of the stakeholders as a whole, they ultimately reflect only the values of the participating individuals. While these values may be largely or even overwhelmingly congruent with the values of the stakeholder segment these people are meant to present, there will inevitably be divergence of values at the margins. It is this divergence that will affect the inclusion or exclusion of sites that do not have widespread and universally acknowledged community significance.

All such approaches have their own problems derived from group dynamics. Vociferous individuals may hold sway, while at the same time the group may defer to real or imagined experts in their midst. The facilitators of the planning process need to be well able to control this, without imposing their own ideology on the outcomes.

PROBLEMS WITH SITE IDENTIFICATION

Despite a plethora of current approaches, places worthy of heritage protection are slipping through the net. This is in part due the mesh size used, i.e., the criteria applied for the eligibility test as well as the interpretation of these criteria. But, to stay with the analogy of fishing, often the wrong fishing method is being used: while focus groups and guided survey questions allow us to query in-depth views about heritage, they can in fact limit the range of places mentioned, simply by subconsciously restricting the view of participants as what does and what does not constitute a heritage item.
An alternative approach is to have the general public nominate heritage places of importance to them. This can be carried out by sending open-ended anonymous questionnaires to all households (cf. Harris 1995; Spennemann & Harris 1996; Spennemann et al. 2001), or by representative random sample drawn from the electoral roll (Savage 2001). The differences between ‘normal’ community studies and such general approaches are striking.

The dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage which is so deeply ingrained in the institutional structures and staff of many non-Indigenous conservation agencies has little meaning to the general public when asked to nominate place of heritage value. Indeed, the most frequently mentioned places in open ended anonymous community surveys were natural heritage items to which the community had a social attachment (cf Harris 1995, Spennemann et al. 2000; Savage 2001). The key problem is to sort out whether these are true heritage places with cultural social values attributed to them or whether these are places with a high community amenity value. Savage (2001) conducted a heritage assessment in the Shire of Esk southwest of Brisbane, and compared the results of previous expert-driven as well as community workshop-based heritage studies with those by open-ended anonymous questionnaires (table 1). Both the range of site types and the overall number of sites proposed is much greater. The latter method provides a more accurate reflection of a community’s heritage as it also captures members of the ‘silent majority,’ who for various reasons would not attend workshops or public meetings about heritage, but who too are rate payers and who have a stake in an LGAs heritage management strategy.

Table 1. Comparison of the sites nominated in various heritages studies conducted in the Shire of Esk (Qld) (after Savage 2001).

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RISKS ASSOCIATED IN RELYING SOLELY ON COMMUNITY VIEWS

Granting every community the right to self-determine the future manifestation of its own heritage, poses potential problems however. In particular, the past is likely to be glorified with nostalgia dominating (Bickford 1981, Lowenthal 1985), while dissonant heritage sites will simply disappear in a climate of political streamlining to a contemporary ideal (Spennemann 1992; Tunbridge and Ashworth...
It takes courage to preserve and manage sites the presence of which may cause community anguish (Hollow & Spennemann 2001; Hollow 2002).

Thus there remains a role for the expert, who with the benefit of helicopter-vision can provide input into the planning process. However, the ethical conundrum remains to what extent the expert should exert his or her expert status to provide an alternative (or amended view).

**EXAMPLE: ALBURY NSW**

Albury, NSW, can serve as an example of the transition from an expert-driven type of study to a community-driven type. The local historical society conducted a brief listing of buildings in 1975, paying particular attention to architecturally and aesthetically significant buildings. This list was transitioned without much change into a National Trust Listing (Latona 1976). A Central Albury Heritage study was developed, drawing on the extant dataset as the basis (Collean & o'Dwyer 1990), which the 1993 Main Street Study continued (Freeman Collette & Fransen 1993). The foci of all these studies of Albury heritage, or particular the subset of the CBD, was on architecturally or historically important buildings. Heritage more recent than the 1920s was largely ignored, as were more ‘mundane’ places, such as transportation sites apart from the obvious, such as the Albury Railway Station.

In 2003 Albury City commissioned a community heritage study, which was developed drawing on the NSW Heritage Office guidelines for Community-Based Heritage Studies (NSW Heritage 2001c). This study, which is still in draft form (AlburyCity 2003) drew on a series of local historic themes which had already been critically appraised (Durrant 1996), and which were a subset of the broad historic themes identified by the Australian Heritage Commission (2001) and those identified by NSW Heritage (2001). This study brought out a wide range of places that had so far been overlooked, particular with respect to the post World War II migrant experience. While new sites were added, no recommendation was made to critically appraise those sites previously identified.

While the community-based study is a welcome addition, it too had serious short comings as significant structures were overlooked although relating to the theme of transportation and Albury as a rural service centre. During heritage assessments in preparation for the development of a new museum and library complex two structures were identified which, albeit modified over time, represent unique examples. One is the only known large stables and coach terminal of the regional coach company Crawford & Co (Spennemann 2003d) and the other Albury’s first purpose-built motor garage (1913) were the first proprietors also built a monoplane, one of the extremely few Australian-built planes of that era shown to have actually flown (Spennemann 2003e). As the structures were not included in the previous heritage studies, and had not been flagged in the community study either, development approval for demolition was given by Council.

Why were these two items never identified until in-depth research was carried out immediately prior to development approval? There are four reasons, one of age, and three of subconscious attitudes. At the time the first heritage studies were carried out by the National Trust, these structures were in use as motor garages, with rendered facades and enlarged windows for show rooms that masked their architectural significance. At the time of the recent community study, the structures, in their present state with modern metal siding parapets and cantilevered verandahs do look modern and are also visually decidedly unappealing. Any nostalgic appeal by the widest stretch of imagination is further undermined by the previous function of the buildings, motor garages and service centres—such utility structures are not recognized by the general public, unless public education (or manipulation?) as to their value has occurred. And finally, the age composition of those present at the community consultation is such that the period of significance pre-dates their own life experiences.

**PROBLEMS IN EVALUATION**

The heritage legislation of Australian States requires the evaluation of the cultural significance of identified properties based on four main values: aesthetic value, historical value, scientific value and social value—with individual states using variations of these four. These have been developed from
Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, which was originally developed in 1979 and which has since been revised (in 1981, 1988 and 1999) (Marquis-Kyle & Walker 1992; Australia ICOMOS 1999). At the time the Burra Charter was conceptualised, the expert and, usually his, opinion held sway. What constituted aesthetic, historical, or scientific value was more or less universally understood, with some interpretation around the edges. Indeed, in 1990 it was asserted that the determination of cultural heritage significance was a simple process (Kerr 1990). The inclusion of social value was a recognition that there might be places that are imbued with values relative to a community or held by the community outside the normal expert opinion. How to assess this kind of value was never fully investigated until Chris Johnson's study of 1992 (Johnson 1992).

This occurred about the same time as an increased empowerment of Indigenous Australians in the evaluation and management of their own heritage (Jonas 1991), which opened the door for other numerically small ethnic sections of the Australian community to have similar rights to self-determination of their cultural identity and its manifestation in the environment. As argued by Lockwood and Spennemann (2001) this raises the issue of the ‘Balkanisation’ or fractionation of heritage. In the ultimate reduction, this will create a plethora of spatially local, culturally ethnic and possibly even spiritually diverse heritages. In this regard heritage management firmly enters the arena of the debate on the relative merits of assimilation and multiculturalism.

Several ethnic/migrant studies have been developed on a state level (cf. Turnbull and Valiotis 2001; Pesman and Kevin 1999; Williams 1999), mainly drawing on specialist studies, as well as community workshops (Anon. 1999). Similar attempts at a LGA level, if carried out by the council and outside consultants governed by short time frames, are poised to be met with distrust by some ethnic communities, and by questions as to whether the elected representatives and spokespeople for these communities can in fact represent them on heritage matters (Canning 1999). While ethnic-specific studies increase the risk of fractionation, avoiding such studies reinforces cultural domination. Policy decisions for affirmative action disfavouring competing Anglo-Celtic interests for a set time frame, for example, have been publicly argued for (Spennemann 1993). A LGA Heritage Plan in the true sense can in fact quite easily accommodate such temporary shifts in emphasis.

Despite the fractionation of the Australian heritage into a series of ‘heritages’ and despite the realization that ultimately aesthetic, historical and scientific value are not independent values but values contingent on the social value concept held by contemporary society (Byrne et al 2001), or sections thereof, social value has remained a somewhat nebulous concept. A content analysis of all Heritage Management Plans written for NSW LGA’s between 1992 and 1999 (n=72), for example, showed that social value considerations were negligible (Canning & Spennemann 2001). Less than one percent of the pages dedicated to the assessment of cultural values in these studies dealt with social value, compared to almost half dealing with historic value. The underlying problem appeared to be the nature of the heritage planners, mainly architects, who lack anthropological training (Canning & Spennemann 2001; see also Pocock 2002). The compressed time frame available for a proper social value assessment was seen as a contributing factor. This points to the problem that heritage management plans are seen as projects with finite, preferably short, time lines, rather than as ongoing constructs. A true LGA management plan can identify the short comings in the understanding of social and community values and can schedule the ongoing assessment of the issue over, say a three-year duration.

**Mutability of Values**

Objects, places and resources have no intrinsic value *per se*. Individuals project value onto an object, place or resource based on their own needs and desires, shaped by their current social, cultural and economic circumstances, which in turn are informed, and to a degree predisposed, by an individual’s personal history of experiences, upbringing and ideological formation. In non-Indigenous as well as non-Fundamentalist social environments, values tend not to be absolute, with individuals holding different values with varying strengths of conviction. Subjective valuation, revaluation and ultimately
prioritisation occur consciously and subconsciously on a continual basis. If a choice has to be made, individuals tend to be prepared to ‘trade-off’ one value against another. These decisions will change with individual circumstances and are subject to change over time (Lockwood & Spennemann 2001).

This fluidity of projected values, both on an individual and a collective level, with continuously shifting ground rules, needs to be acknowledged in planning documents. This does not occur. LGA heritage plans seem to treat evaluation and listing as a finite outcome, with final decisions as to what is, and what is not deemed culturally significant and hence sufficiently valuable to warrant protection. Clearly, values are mutable, and heritage places that may be evaluated as insignificant today may be regarded as significant tomorrow. Much more problematic is the concern that the vast majority of properties was never evaluated as they were never identified in the first place.

Yet at the same time, the very fact of listing individual places as significant, and by this action of affording them protection, solidifies, even enshrines, the values of those making the decision at that time. One aspect that has not been given sufficient attention is the grandfathering in of existing heritage listings, without consideration as to whether a previous inclusion has in fact any merit. In most cases, new heritage studies that are carried out with different methodologies merely add to the overall database. It is assumed, without both justification and reflection, that sites that are already included on a register will remain to be significant. This assumption is spurious, as by its very nature the concept of a mutability of heritage values goes both ways. In many cases an initial list was compiled by the Historic Society and then, in essence ratified by the National Trust. This list then was transitioned into the Local Environmental Plans (or other planning instruments) and thus became legally binding. Yet for many places statements of significance have never been developed, let alone updated and revised in the light of new evidence. Such stagnation exposes the process to criticism by affected parties and undermines the reputation of the listing of places where an inclusion is very much valid.

LOCAL HERITAGE THRESHOLDS

In most states, the LGA is the permitting planning authority for heritage at the local level. Development approvals are assessed against established criteria. Procedures for development decisions with respect to heritage listed places exist throughout Australia and their application has become a routine matter. However, there are cases where items are not (yet) heritage listed, but might be eligible for inclusion in the local list. As outlined above, the focus of heritage changes and past heritage studies may well be out of date and the values may have changed.

At present a property needs to be demonstrated as of heritage significance for protection instruments to be applied. As has become evident in an earlier part of this paper, the planning mechanisms are such that many places worthy of protection can be overlooked. The ideal world, as viewed from a heritage preservation perspective, would see the onus of proof reversed. Each property is deemed of heritage significance, unless demonstrated otherwise. Such a process could easily be streamlined through the development of local criteria and thresholds which would trigger increasing levels of assessment.

Under current administrative arrangements, each LGA can establish its own development approval policies, which can include a requirement that the impact of the development on heritage is to be assessed, both in relation to the structure to be developed and in relation to adjacent or nearby structures. All too often it is forgotten that an individual development of a structure which may be deemed insignificant by itself, can adversely impact on a streetscape and adjacent significant structures. The implementation of such policies can be done in-house by the approving officer based on a set of criteria, with critical indicators and threshold, achieving which would automatically trigger a specialist assessment either in-house by the LGA’s heritage officer, or through outside expert advice. The state acts provide mechanisms for temporary protection of places until such assessment has been carried out.
A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN

As outlined above, local heritage plans tend to conform to the minimum standards required. While the identification of properties allows for their legal protection, the earlier mentioned shortcomings notwithstanding, very few plans go beyond suggesting some sort of legal and administrative management regime. Strategic planning is only very rarely included.

Australia is a continent where, given time and ‘opportunity,’ a natural disaster is likely to happen at any given location. Bush fires and floods are most prominent in people’s minds, but wind storms, localised cloud bursts, and hail storms, cyclones, as well as earthquakes can occur. Given that in many instances it is not a question of whether such an event will occur, but when, it is imperative that these matters be taken into consideration when planning the management of an LGA’s heritage. After all, much of the ‘normal’ decay of heritage properties by way of termites, rot and rising damp, and even inappropriate actions by owners, is of such slow onset that it pales into significance before the potential sudden and wide-spread destruction of heritage properties following a natural disaster event—either caused by the disaster itself or by rash actions of disaster managers following the event (Spennemann 1999)

Does appropriate planning occur? Unfortunately, it is the great exception. A survey of all Heritage Management Plans written for Victorian LGA’s between 1985 and 2002 showed that not one of the 99 studies assessed made any high-level reference to natural hazards or their impacts (Spennemann 2003b). The studies concentrated on the identification of the physical description of identified properties as well as the assessment of cultural significance. The only management-related issues addressed where planning controls and guidelines for property maintenance.

The same occurs when considering the management of individual properties. While reams of paper have been printed dealing with the conservation of structures, very little time, thought and effort is expended considering the impact and management of natural hazards. A survey of Conservation Management Plans written for places on the Victorian Heritage Register between 1997 and 2002 showed that less than 10% made any reference to natural hazards or their impacts (9.2%; n=98; Spennemann 2003a). The same applies to the Conservation Management Plans written for places in New South Wales in the same time period (6.1%; n=58; Spennemann 2003c) Where discussion occurred it was often boiler-plate material and insufficient. No specialized disaster plans were considered.

Overall this is not very surprising. A study of the attitudes of NSW heritage officers and disaster managers (Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service) found that there are attitudinal barriers among heritage managers in recognizing that disasters pose a threat to heritage, as well as barriers among disaster managers in recognizing that cultural heritage items are valuable and require special attention (Graham 2002; Graham and Spennemann in press). Heritage managers too occupied in thinking about day-to-day problems tended to view natural disasters as a threat that might never eventuate, while disaster managers, influenced by their own personal value concepts in relation to heritage, saw heritage as less important than life (no argument there) and personal property. Yet at the same time, heritage places are important markers in community and individual lives (cf. Cuba & Hummon 1993; Manzo 2003), and it is the post-disaster presence of such familiar places and environments that allows communities to rebound from natural disaster events (Fried 2000; Katz et al. 2002). Ideally, heritage places should be regarded as ‘critical infrastructure’ in disaster management activities. If the nexus between heritage and natural disaster impacts is not included in heritage plans, how can we expect to include it in disaster planning?

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

While the LGA is the watchdog for heritage matters at the local level, heritage concerns over development applications, as expressed by council staff, are frequently overridden at the final approval stage, where the ideological views of individual councillors come to the fore. Every single council has individuals who are leaning more to the development side and those who lean more to the conservation side of decisions. It is implicitly assumed that in such matters the councillors reflect the will of the
citizens who voted for them during the last council elections, and that the composition of the
councillors reflects public opinion. Local government rules require individual councillors to declare
potential conflict of interest in the approval of development applications—a requirement which is
being adhered to with a certain degree of interpretation.

A serious conflict of interest, however, occurs, where the council itself is the applicant and
developer. With the LGA as the approval authority for local heritage, decisions can and are being made
that see the destruction of heritage places on local heritage lists, and in particular, places that are not
on local lists, but that are eligible for inclusion in such lists. At present, there is no mechanism in place
that defers such council self-interest decisions to a higher authority. Instead, an outside consultant is
sought to comment on the proposal. Yet again, however, the choice of consultant will to a large degree
predetermine the outcomes. In cases of unlisted items, for example, there is no requirement for that
consultant to address heritage issues. Consequently, proactive protection will not occur.

A WAY OUT

Given all these issues and problems, where do we go from here?

Councils need to accept the notion that any Local Heritage Management Plan is just that—a plan.
Because it forms part of an overall planning process it is not a final document of infinite validity, but a
document with a finite life, which, moreover, will have to be reviewed over its duration. Local Heritage
Management Plans need to take seriously the word ‘management’ and need to take a much more
proactive stance. This implies that the LGA should receive a document that does more than merely
identify and list properties for inclusion in the protective regimes, with a few comments on
management strategies for these sites ‘tacked’ on.

The plan needs to consider the short comings in the knowledge base and identify remedial actions in
the form of further studies, research and assessments. The plan needs to address the history of urban
expansion and urban renewal and needs to provide predictive models on how these trends are likely to
impact on heritage matters. This in turn allows the LGA to gather required information to develop
strategies that can deal with impending developments before too much time, money and emotional
energy has been invested.

A good heritage management plan will review the threats posed to the well-being of heritage places
and will assess, inter alia, the risk posed by natural hazards and include mitigation options, including the
prescription of special disaster management plans.

The authors of the plan, and their political masters, need to understand that there is no single
methodology for identifying heritage places. While protocols for the evaluation and assessment process
have been developed, the survey methodology chosen for the primary identification of places will
precondition the outcomes (see above). Approached rationally, this implies that one of the
shortcomings a plan can recognise is to acknowledge the different approaches and schedule, over the
duration of the plan’s life, additional data/information gathering activities, which will utilise different
techniques.

The plan will need to acknowledge that heritage values are a mutable quality and that, therefore,
places not identified and evaluated as significant, may prove to be so in future. A precautionary
principle needs to pervade the approvals of development applications and a local heritage management
plan should provide for mechanisms of how council can address this.

This, then, leads to another serious aspect which is commonly overlooked in heritage plans. What is
the LGA’s capacity to deal with heritage matters in-house, and can they adequately manage and
evaluate the studies that have been out-sourced? How many in the council staff are qualified, how many
staff are adequately trained? Does it all rest on the shoulders of a single heritage advisor? What is the
level of awareness, and what are the attitudes towards heritage held by the building surveyors and
development approval personnel? What are the councillor’s attitudes? Ideally, all incoming councillors
should undergo initial and refresher training some three months after each council election. The same
applies to council staff.
And finally, the plan should also make provisions for and set out strategies to effectively manage individual sites identified. Standardised site management plans (SMP) should be developed for each individual property listed on the local heritage register/environmental plan. An SMP should include an overall site management policy informed by the assessment of cultural significance and should address four components: conservation management, disaster management, visitor management and site interpretation. Such a site management plan may well be rudimentary to start with, but where appropriate, detailed specialised (sub-)plans, as well as a detailed history should be developed for each of the four components.

Let us go back to the initial assertion that cultural heritage management is a facet of social management. Public education is an imperative if we wish to raise the public profile of heritage and the acceptance of regulatory mechanisms. A good local heritage management plan will identify needs in this area and will identify themes and strategies that can be used over the duration of a plan’s life. Beyond that, the plan authors need to be cognisant and upfront about the nature of fractionation of the past into a number of ‘heritages’ and that these need to be addressed within a LGA in a balanced fashion. It will require structured multi-year strategies and may involve concepts akin to ‘affirmative action.’ Any such activity will require that the community is fully supportive, which in turn requires public consultation and education.

However, there needs to be an upfront acknowledgement of the ideological messages that any public education campaign would include. Because community values attached to heritage places are mutable variables, and because an individual’s values are shaped by life experiences and outside stimuli, we need to recognise that public education campaigns will influence such values. By undertaking such campaigns, we are actively shaping the perception of our past by the present and thus creating the foundations of the reception our past in a future world. There is a conundrum in this. As long as it occurs subconsciously, as is most frequently the case, no one seems to worry. No one seems to question the ideology of why specific (types of) sites are included in heritage lists and others are not. Yet, if we spell out these issues in a section of the planning document, we may be accused of social engineering, of creating an artificial past. But isn’t all heritage management through its selective preservation of places an imposition of our ideas and ideals anyway? The best we can do is to aware of all the issue discussed in this paper and attempt find a workable balance.
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