Chapter 6. Cultural Heritage Management

6.1 What is cultural heritage?

Cultural heritage is the value people have given to items and places through their association with those items and places. These values include those of significance to Aboriginal people, places of social value to the NSW community, and places of historic, architectural or scientific significance, and therefore encompass both Aboriginal and historic heritage. While cultural heritage is often spoken about as either Aboriginal or historic (non-Aboriginal), this distinction is misleading because all members of the NSW community have had a shared history within the NSW landscape since European settlement. For example, Aboriginal cultural heritage has associations in pastoral landscapes as well as associations linked with the mission period. This notion represents a shift in conventional cultural heritage management, and acknowledges that culture belongs as much in the present as it does in the past and that it evolves and changes along with society.

All landscapes contain cultural heritage and hence it is an aspect of all landscapes managed by the NPWS. People assign values to those landscapes including those associated with knowledge, songs, stories, art, objects, places, events, buildings, dreaming paths and/or human remains. In addition, natural elements of the landscape that acquire meaning for a particular Aboriginal group are considered to have cultural heritage value, and may include landforms, minerals and biodiversity. Cultural heritage also represents the continuity from one generation to another of a group’s culture, values and attitudes.

The NSW park system conserves a diverse and significant collection of cultural heritage landscapes. Across New South Wales these places are part of a continually evolving archive documenting our relationship with land. They reflect our cultural values, our aspirations and our responses to land through time. This rich heritage is a vital and essential record of our history, for it is a tangible reminder of our past and a legitimate part of our future.

There has been a shift in the approach of park management organisations, including the NPWS, to move from a focus on cultural heritage management of objects and sites to the more inclusive definition of cultural heritage described above. It is a move from limiting the assessment of the significance of cultural heritage to scientific methods such as archaeology, to including the assessment of social significance. This approach involves communities in providing their explanation of why something is of cultural and social importance to them.
6.2 Management of cultural heritage through time

As our understanding of cultural values has changed over time so has the way in which we manage these values. The time-line presented in Figure 19 outlines some of the significant milestones in cultural heritage management.

6.3 Objectives for cultural heritage management in the NSW park system

The primary objectives for cultural heritage management in New South Wales are to:

- acknowledge the intrinsic link between Aboriginal cultural heritage and the natural environment
- manage Aboriginal and historic heritage places, landscapes, cultural practices and stories on park
- manage evidence of past land uses such as agriculture or mining in addition to specific significant historic places and landscapes, and reflect shared histories between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that worked together in these industries
- present and interpret significant cultural heritage places to park users and visitors
- work actively with community groups to facilitate the conservation of and access to their heritage, including the provision of access to parks to continue cultural practices
- facilitate conservation outcomes through the sustainable use of buildings, landscapes and places, thus enabling a vibrant and living approach to heritage conservation and management.

6.4 Cultural heritage management processes

Within the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), the NPWS has the responsibility for managing cultural heritage within the park system, while other parts of DEC have an important strategic and policy setting role. DEC is also responsible for managing Aboriginal cultural heritage outside of the park system. Within this section of the report the roles and activities of the NPWS will be discussed under the banner of the wider DEC. For a description of the legislation that governs cultural heritage management in NSW see Appendix A.

A critical part of DEC’s role is assessing and managing the cultural values of the heritage places it manages. In New South Wales, the protection and management of cultural heritage is driven by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Burra Charter (1999), a set of guidelines for the conservation of places of cultural significance in Australia. The Burra Charter acknowledges that to understand our past, and to contribute to our future generations, it is important to protect places of cultural significance (Marquis-Kyle and Walker 1992). It provides a consistent and internationally comparable approach to assessing the significance of cultural heritage.

Figure 19

A time-line of the history of cultural heritage within the NSW park system and how values and management have changed over time.

Aboriginal people arrived in Australia. Estimates suggest that Aboriginal people were the first to colonise the Australian continent between 40,000 and 60,000 years ago. 1788: Port Jackson penal colony established. The arrival of the first European settlers marks the beginning of Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians’ shared history and an exploratory phase in the history of NSW. Explorers, surveyors and scientists, frequently described Aboriginal culture. Thus began the recording and classifying of Aboriginal cultural heritage. During this time Europeans attempted to understand Aboriginal heritage without input from the people to whom it was significant.

1801: Australian Historical Society was founded. Membership was predominantly Anglo-Celtic, middle class and male. It represented early middle class interest in ‘heritage sites’.

1901: Australian National Trust was founded. It focused on the preservation and restoration of stately homes. A register of buildings was established and buildings were classified on aesthetic style rather than technological or historical criteria.

1947: The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service was established. This involved a so-called empirical approach that discouraged any methods not amenable to ‘scientific proof’. This approach was sceptical of social significance because it was not scientifically measurable or open to easy methods of validation.

1960s: A rise of the New Archaeology. Through this act the historic site became an important category specifically devoted to the management of cultural values. Five of the six historic sites gazetted in this year were to preserve historic heritage and one to conserve Aboriginal heritage. The Act also provided for the protection of Aboriginal ‘relics’.

1967: Establishment of the NPWS through the National Parks and Wildlife Act. This unit undertook a ten-year survey of sites of significance and built an Aboriginal Sites Register. The NPWS also established an Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee composed of representatives from the Australian Museum, the Mines Department and the Anthropological Society of NSW. There were no Aboriginal representatives on this committee.

1970: Aboriginal Sites Unit established in the NPWS.
The Burra Charter encourages cultural heritage managers to collect and analyse information about heritage before making decisions about its management.

Within parks, the management of cultural heritage by DEC reflect the Burra Charter, whereby the significance of values is assessed and understood, and planning tools such as conservation management plans (CMPs) are utilised to prepare for the appropriate management and conservation of important values. While this is the same management method applied to natural values within parks, the evolving understanding of what constitutes cultural values provides DEC with a challenge in effectively and consistently implementing this approach. DEC is working towards measuring its performance in cultural heritage management and this chapter presents the over-arching processes that are being developed within the NSW park system. This is an ongoing process within DEC and future State of the Parks reports will outline progress made.

Due to the extent of cultural heritage within the park system, there is a need to direct management to the highest priorities. To assist the allocation of funding to high-priority cultural heritage values, DEC has developed cultural heritage management strategies for each region of New South Wales. These identify key sites, assign them management priorities and outline the key considerations that should be made in managing high-priority sites. Sections 6.4.1 to 6.4.3 outline some of the tools that DEC uses in assessing significance, planning and managing these high priority sites.

### 6.4.1 Assessing significance

Interpreting the cultural significance of places and landscapes is based on an analysis of oral, documentary and physical evidence, and their social, aesthetic, historic and scientific values. Working closely with the relevant communities is essential to fully understand cultural heritage and so develop more effective conservation outcomes. Where appropriate, DEC also utilises cultural heritage specialists to provide advice to park managers about the cultural values of a park and the best way to determine their significance. These specialists include archaeologists, historians and members of local Aboriginal communities. Often producing a plan of management is the first stage in assessing the significance of the cultural heritage within a park. This enables park managers to consider whether key values require more detailed assessments.

Statements of significance (SoS) are prepared for high priority historic cultural heritage within parks and are prepared in accordance with the criteria outlined in the Heritage Manual (NSW Heritage Office 1996). A SoS also makes general recommendations about the most appropriate method of management such as protection from pests and weeds or vandalism, or may involve more active management. If the site is highly significant or the management of the site is likely to be complex, a CMP may be prepared (see Section 6.4.2).

It is appropriate for Aboriginal people to assess the significance of their own heritage and so DEC employs Aboriginal Heritage Officers (AHO) in each region. By facilitating open
communication with local Aboriginal communities DEC can have the significance of sites, objects or places explained to it. Where routine works or intended developments are planned in the vicinity of known Aboriginal sites, these AHO consult with the community about the significance of a site and often prepare a significance assessment for the area. These consultations can result in either the alteration of planned works to avoid significant sites or the community giving permission to interfere with or destroy the site. A similar process is also followed when works are likely to impact on historic heritage.

Underpinning the assessment of the significance of cultural heritage within the NSW park system is a program of strategic research. The key themes presently being investigated include cultural landscapes, the integration of natural and cultural heritage conservation (see Case study 10), social significance, cross cultural studies, women’s heritage, and neighbours and communities.

6.4.2 Planning for management

Where the significance of historic heritage has been assessed and further planning is required, a CMP is produced. A CMP outlines the values of a place in detail, describes their significance and associated history, then sets out the actions required for proper management of the place, for both restoring it to an acceptable standard and for cyclical maintenance. DEC prepares CMPs for all cultural heritage places within parks that are listed on the State Heritage Register.

CASE STUDY 10

Place of plenty – the Arakwal ethnobotanical study

The Byron Bay Arakwal people have a deep and intimate attachment to the land – their country – and they acknowledge the diversity of the habitats in the region, and the important wild resources these yield.

Although it remains a rich resource for bush food and medicine, the area around Byron Bay has been considerably altered by human impacts since the early 1870s. This trend has escalated in recent decades with the increasing resident population and tourist influx. Within their lifetimes the Arakwal Elders have seen the destruction of rainforests, draining of swamps, degradation of streams and introduction of pest plants and animals. These changes have resulted from the pressures of urbanisation and local sandmining. Intensive sandmining in the 1960s has led to the modification of sand dunes and other coastal landforms, and the widespread planting of exotic plants such as bitou bush has contributed to the spread of weeds that threaten the native species so valued by the community.

Through the joint management arrangement for the Arakwal National Park that exists between the Arakwal people and the NPWS (an Indigenous Land Use Agreement or ILUA – see Section 2.5) the community have continued to harvest wild resources in the park. A project arose from collaborative work between the NPWS and the Arakwal Aboriginal Corporation to identify and document the social and cultural values associated with the reserves in Byron Bay Arakwal Country. The project aimed to benefit park management, cultural renewal and cultural tourism programs, and to promote awareness of the importance of bush foods and medicines in the lives of Aboriginal people.

Initially the project assessed community attachments to the park landscape through the collection of oral histories from the Arakwal Elders, field inspections and community meetings, to determine the ways in which they valued the local biodiversity. The values identified were wild resources (which relate to the value of cultural knowledge), totems (which relate to the values of stories and songs), and the continuing relationship with their country A key component of the project involved the Arakwal Elders and other community members working closely with an ecologist to map and describe the biodiversity they value.

The resultant book, Place of plenty: Culturally useful plants around Byron Bay (NSW NPWS 2004c) will be used by the Byron Bay Arakwal people in their cultural renewal and cultural tourism programs, to educate their children and grandchildren, along with visitors to the park, about their culture and the lands around Byron Bay. In addition, the project has stimulated discussions between community members and NPWS staff about how park management activities, such as fire and pest species control, might be carried out in recognition of Aboriginal values. Revegetation and coastal restoration programs on land affected by sandmining involve the Aboriginal community to ensure that the appropriate species are replanted to restore the landscape.

The project is a reflection of the ongoing role of the Byron Bay Arakwal people in decision-making about the park, its biodiversity and cultural landscape. It has helped to facilitate improved communication between Aboriginal people and land managers, and has shown how they can work together successfully to explore the cultural use of a park landscape for teaching and gathering. Importantly, it illustrates that these and other activities can be established and managed to achieve dual natural and cultural conservation outcomes, while providing for other park uses such as tourism.

Arakwal Elders and an ecologist documenting the culturally important plants in Arakwal National Park.

K. Graham / DEC
The development of CMPs is supported by a range of guidelines and standards that have been produced by DEC to assist park managers in planning for the appropriate management and protection of cultural heritage. DEC cultural heritage management strategies also help determine the long-term conservation and management outcomes that CMPs should aim to achieve. Included in a CMP, where appropriate, are options for education and interpretation of a site for park visitors.

Planning for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage involves AHO engaging with communities to determine the most appropriate management of Aboriginal places. While this process is generally limited to known or gazetted Aboriginal places, landscapes likely to be rich in Aboriginal cultural values can also be considered, for example, the travelling routes used historically by Aboriginal communities. This enables development within a park to be placed away from culturally sensitive landscapes.

6.4.3 Management programs

There are a range of ways in which cultural heritage is managed within parks. Recommendations for management are made through a statement of significance or a CMP for high priority or highly significant cultural heritage. The type of management that may be required ranges from stabilisation works, protective fencing, emergency or conservation works, installing interpretive signage or threat mitigation works. When active works are required for a site, park managers may first be required to undertake a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to consider the impact of the works on both natural and cultural values.

The NSW government provides DEC with a grant of $2 million annually, in addition to its recurrent funding, for maintenance and planning for high-priority built historic heritage within parks. The cost of restoration and maintenance of all the built heritage on parks exceeds the funding available, so careful targeting is necessary. DEC has developed the Historic Heritage Asset Maintenance Program (HAMP) to allocate the available funding to the highest priority planning and on-ground works across the NSW park system. This process considers a range of factors including the significance of the cultural heritage values of a site, the risk involved in not undertaking the works, community interaction with the site, and the site’s financial sustainability.

As described above, DEC engages with local Aboriginal communities to ensure significant Aboriginal places receive appropriate management. This management may include enabling communities to access significant sites, or limiting access to culturally sensitive sites by park visitors. Alternatively management may involve providing appropriate interpretation and education – for the benefit of the wider community – about the significance of the place to Aboriginal communities. Discovery programs (see Section 7.3.1), publications and interpretive material all communicate the importance of cultural heritage to the community. Aboriginal communities determine the material that is appropriate and its interpretation for Aboriginal Discovery programs.

Managing cultural heritage requires specialist skills and knowledge such as those necessary to protect and conserve Aboriginal rock art sites. To assist in training new park staff and land managers from other organisations such as local Aboriginal land councils, DEC has developed a field-based training program and accompanying guidelines that aim to reduce a range of pressures on the integrity of rock art sites. These include natural pressures such as water damage (mitigated through the use of silicon) or accumulation of lichen or mud from nest-building insects (carefully removed using special techniques), and unnatural pressures such as damage caused by livestock (managed through pest control, fencing or the use of cattle grids). Additional subjects currently being prepared include site monitoring techniques and ways of managing sites for visitation, including dealing with vandalism and graffiti.

Archaeology is also a specialist skill and can contribute appreciatively to our understanding of how people lived in the past, an essential part of cultural heritage. Archaeology has provided important information about the lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people through the discovery of artefacts, structural remains and other items, revealing how previous generations lived and the complex exchanges and interconnections between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This provides us with a unique insight into the dynamics of exchange between cultures during periods where historical records alone do not provide a complete picture.

Other important tools for preserving cultural heritage are historical research and oral history projects. By documenting the historical context and people’s attachments to places, DEC can better guide park planning, conservation and the interpretation of historic heritage.

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Chapter 6. Cultural Heritage Management

6.5 Knowledge of cultural heritage

Key findings
- Park managers consider that they have sufficient information about Aboriginal heritage to guide planning and decision-making in parks constituting 45 per cent of the area of the NSW park system.
- Information on historic heritage is considered to be sufficient to guide planning and decision-making in parks constituting 74 per cent of the area of the park system.

6.5.1 Knowledge of Aboriginal heritage

Currently DEC records all relevant information about Aboriginal sites, places and landscapes in a database called the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS). In June 2004 this database held 33,501 records of Aboriginal sites, places and landscapes within New South Wales, 8,971 of which occur within the NSW park system (Map 11). This is an invaluable resource for DEC but is also utilised widely by different sectors of the community and other government agencies.

CASE STUDY 11

The values of Mungo National Park

Mungo National Park was added to the NSW park system in 1979 when the NPWS acquired the 1922 ‘soldier settlement’ block known as Mungo. Three years later most of Mungo National Park, as part of the Willandra Lakes Region, was placed on the World Heritage List (see Section 3.5.4). The Willandra Lakes Region achieved this listing because it contains outstanding cultural and natural heritage of universal value, and many of these values are contained within Mungo National Park, including globally significant archaeological, geomorphological and palaeontological values.

The area is a culturally significant place for three Aboriginal tribes: Ngyiampaa, Mutthi Mutthi and the southern Paakantyi. These tribes used the area that is now Mungo National Park as a meeting place, for ceremonies and to trade items. Mungo National Park is under a co-management agreement with the three Traditional Tribal Groups (3TTG) Elders Council to represent all three tribes (see Case study 1 on page 19). The late Alice Kelly, a Mutthi Mutthi Tribal Elder described Mungo as ‘the place where people and the land become one, where our people walk with the spirits of our ancestors’.

Mungo National Park and the surrounding area is also significant for its shared history. European settlement in the region dates back to the 1850s when huge pastoral holdings were taken up in south-west New South Wales. Several key features of this early pastoral era remain within Mungo National Park including the Mungo woolshed dating from 1878, the Mungo homestead and shearsers’ quarters and the stables, dugout, shearing shed and yards from the old Zanci station. This historical association with the pastoral era is a shared association between both the non-indigenous community and the local Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal stockmen and shearsers were among the staff of many pastoral properties in the west of the state, including Mungo Station.

Scientists also value Mungo National Park because it provides a unique insight into the changing climate during the Pleistocene period and human society’s response to that change. The sediments in the lunettes (crescent shaped dunes rising up to 40 metres) provide a 50,000 year record of changes in the earth’s environment and magnetic field and also contain the remains of some of Australia’s megafauna. These sediments also provide evidence of Aboriginal occupation dating back at least 40,000 years and some of the oldest burials and cremations in the world.

Mungo National Park has significant natural values including landscape formations, vegetation communities and a range of important fauna, which are inseparable from the cultural values of the landscape. The Aboriginal community has a special association with these natural values because of their connection with the landscape and their history of utilising the natural values of the region. The non-indigenous community also has a special association with the landscape for recreation and the satisfaction of being close to nature.

The cultural associations with Mungo of the Aboriginal, non-indigenous and the scientific communities, including the ancient history of the land, contemporary attachments and its outstanding natural values, make Mungo National Park an ideal place for the NSW community to learn about both cultural and natural heritage and how they are connected. The recent Draft Plan of Management for Mungo National Park outlines a number of initiatives to ensure that the outstanding cultural and natural values of the park are interpreted and promoted in a sustainable manner (NSW NPWS 2004b).

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A historic woolshed in Mungo National Park.

DEC
While the AHIMS compiles the available knowledge on Aboriginal heritage in New South Wales it is clear that effort still needs to be directed to ensuring that staff have enough information about these values to support planning and management decisions. Where parks have known Aboriginal places and sites, staff in parks constituting over 45 per cent of the area of the NSW park system indicated that there is sufficient information to support planning and decision-making, at least in key areas (Figure 20).

This trend varies considerably according to the park type, size and age. The strongest relationship is with park type, which reflects the purpose for which a park was created. Aboriginal areas and historic sites are reported to have the best information available about their Aboriginal values and have been primarily conserved to protect cultural values. National parks are reported as having reasonably good information available about their Aboriginal values. Generally park managers considered that they had far less knowledge of Aboriginal sites and places available for use in park planning and decision-making within nature reserves and state conservation areas, where the primary purpose for the area is the conservation of natural values.

**Figure 20**

Level of information about Aboriginal heritage places and sites available to guide planning and decision-making within parks

(Data source [ii], n=469)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of NSW park system by area</th>
<th>Area and number of parks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>766,016 ha, 50 parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1,843,124 ha, 211 parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2,875,557 ha, 117 parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>275,604 ha, 91 parks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information on Aboriginal places and sites is sufficient for planning and decision-making

Information on Aboriginal places and sites is sufficient for key areas of planning and decision-making but there are some gaps

Information on Aboriginal places and sites is insufficient in most cases to support planning and decision-making

There is insufficient information available on Aboriginal places and sites to use in planning and decision-making

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**Map 11**

The number of Aboriginal sites, places and landscapes per park recorded through the AHIMS

(Data source [iii])
6.5.2 Knowledge of historic heritage

To complement the AHIMS, in 2002 the NPWS produced the Historic Heritage Information Management System (HHIMS). In June 2004 there were 7,649 records in the HHIMS database for historic heritage occurring within parks (Map 12). There are also a small number of records within HHIMS that refer to historic heritage on land adjacent to a park. The records within the HHIMS database can provide DEC staff with the relevant information about the historic heritage found within their parks. This information can be used to guide the management of the item if management is required, or to locate known heritage within the park to ensure that it is not damaged during any capital works such as track construction.

The available knowledge for planning and decision-making for historic heritage is reported to be more complete than that for Aboriginal cultural heritage, with 74 per cent of the area of the NSW park system being considered to have sufficient knowledge (Figure 21).

There is a positive relationship between knowledge of historic heritage and the type of park, the size of the park and whether the park has a plan of management. Historic sites are reported as having excellent information available about their historic values, while the information available for national parks, nature reserves and state conservation areas is generally not considered as good. While managers of historic sites reported having good information about Aboriginal heritage, generally staff in Aboriginal areas reported having less information available about their historic heritage.

Map 12

The number of historic sites per park recorded through the HHIMS
(Data source (iii))
6.6 Condition of cultural heritage

Key findings
- Park managers consider the condition of Aboriginal heritage to be generally good in parks constituting 78 per cent of the area of the NSW park system.
- The condition of historic heritage is generally considered to be good in parks constituting 52 per cent of the park system.

Within the NSW park system the condition of cultural heritage values is generally reported favourably. Figure 22 shows that the condition of Aboriginal heritage is reported to be better on average across a greater area of the NSW park system than is the condition of historic heritage. Contributing to this difference in condition may be the built structures generally associated with historic heritage, which are complex and costly to maintain, particularly as they get older.

When these data are further examined we find that the condition of Aboriginal heritage is considered to be poorer where parks have a large number of neighbours. This may simply indicate that it is more difficult to maintain the condition of cultural values when parks are used by many people and in a landscape with many different uses. Similarly, the condition of historic heritage values is more likely to be reported as good in small parks. This may be because large parks, particularly those in the Sydney region, tend to have more historic heritage and it is a greater challenge to keep it all in good condition.
6.7 Pressures on cultural heritage values

Key findings
- Park managers consider that cultural heritage management is reducing the negative impacts on Aboriginal heritage in parks constituting 41 per cent of the area of the NSW park system.
- The planned management programs for historic heritage are considered to reducing negative impacts on these values in parks constituting 56 per cent of the park system.

A lack of knowledge about cultural heritage values is one of the most significant threats to the conservation of these values. Without a sound knowledge of where cultural heritage values are within parks – and their level of significance and current condition – it is very difficult to effectively manage these values. While DEC may attempt to engage with communities to ensure all cultural values are identified, sometimes communities are unwilling to provide this information for fear that revealing the location of a site could lead to it being threatened or destroyed. There may also be a loss of community knowledge about cultural values in parks as people move away or significant community members die. Cultural values can also be threatened by a lack of understanding within the wider community of the importance of cultural heritage. It is therefore an important role of DEC to ensure that the significance of important cultural values is interpreted for park visitors, to increase their appreciation and understanding of important sites or places.

A lack of resources is also a threat to the appropriate management of cultural heritage within parks. Meeting the cost of restoring and managing many cultural heritage values within the NSW park system, particularly historic values in and around Sydney, requires significant resources. Restoring and managing all cultural heritage places within the park system is not feasible and DEC must allocate the available resources to the most significant and highest-priority places. It is inevitable that some heritage values will in time be lost. Alternatively, adaptive re-use options may be considered where this is consistent with the conservation management plan for the heritage item or plan of management for the park (see Case study 12). The concept of adaptive re-use combines public use, education, appreciation and enjoyment within a business context, to raise funds for the conservation and maintenance of the site. It involves the use of places with heritage values, while retaining the cultural significance of the building or structure.

Natural processes also pose a major threat to cultural heritage. Inclement weather can result in water damage or soil erosion that can damage historic buildings and Aboriginal sites or rock art. Fire is also a major threat to built heritage, along with pest animals such as termites and destructive weeds such as ivy. Pest animals and weeds can also damage Aboriginal heritage such as rock art (see Section 5.2.3).

Vandalism and non-sustainable visitor levels pose another threat to cultural heritage. DEC must ensure that these pressures are taken into account when planning and managing cultural heritage in parks.

CASE STUDY 12

Historic lighthouses and adaptive re-use

Between 1853 and 1903, 13 lighthouses were constructed on isolated and rugged headlands and islands along the NSW coast to aid the development of Australia’s north-south shipping route. Designed to act like ‘a street with lamps’, the lighthouses assisted trade and other shipping vessels to negotiate the dangerous shoals, headlands, bars and reefs along the NSW coast.

Before modern technology negated the need for lighthouse keepers, lighthouses were typically operated by a head lighthouse keeper and 1-2 assistant lighthouse keepers. These individuals and their families formed lighthouse communities. Operators staffed the lighthouse through the night in four-hour shifts and during the day would undertake the maintenance necessary to protect the lighthouse and associated buildings from damage by wind, rain and salt spray. The isolated and rugged nature of lighthouse settings meant that typically these communities had poor access to schools and emergency medical facilities and in bad weather could be cut off from supplies.

This remoteness and isolation had benefits for the conservation of the natural environments surrounding lighthouses and many of these areas have now become part of the park system. While the lighthouses still in operation in NSW are maintained by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, ten of the original 13 lighthouse precincts are now protected and maintained by the NPWS. The lighthouse keepers’ cottages and other associated buildings have also been preserved in many cases, along with gardens and historic heritage associated with the operation of lighthouses in NSW.

The ten lighthouses managed by the NPWS are:
- Cape Byron (Cape Byron State Conservation Area)
- South Solitary Island (Solitary Islands Marine Park)
- Smoky Cape (Hat Head National Park)
- Sugarloaf Point (Myall Lakes National Park)
- Point Stephens (Tomaree National Park)
- Barrenjoey Head (Ku-ring-gai National Park)
- Hornby – Inner South Head (Sydney Harbour National Park)
- Cape Baily (Botany Bay National Park)
- Montague Island (Montague Island Nature Reserve) and
- Green Cape (Ben Boyd National Park).

Whilst today the maritime role of these lighthouses is somewhat diminished, each of these lighthouse precincts has unique cultural heritage that the NPWS works to protect. These historic lighthouses must be protected whilst ensuring that the public is able to access and appreciate the sites where appropriate. One way that the NPWS can achieve both of these aims is through increasing the tourism opportunities available...
Managing threats to cultural heritage is a challenge for DEC. For Aboriginal cultural heritage, staff in parks constituting 41 per cent of the area of the NSW park system reported that management is leading to a reduction in the negative impacts on important Aboriginal heritage values. Negative impacts on important historic heritage values are reported as being reduced through management in parks constituting 56 per cent of the area of the NSW park system (Figure 23).

While DEC’s performance in state conservation areas and nature reserves requires improvement, it is encouraging that Aboriginal areas, historic sites and national parks are reported to be managing the threats to cultural heritage most successfully.

Figure 23

Performance in the management of threats to cultural values
(Data source (ii), n = 430 – Aboriginal heritage; n=329 – historic heritage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of NSW park system by area</th>
<th>Aboriginal Heritage</th>
<th>Historic Heritage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area and number of parks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>423,316 ha  29 parks</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A planned approach to managing this issue is being implemented that is resulting in a significant reduction in negative impacts on important cultural heritage values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,840,196 ha  172 parks</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A planned approach to managing this issue is being implemented and negative impacts on important cultural heritage values are slowly diminishing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,912,421 ha  121 parks</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management activities are being implemented to address this issue but negative impacts on important cultural heritage values remain unchanged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400,419 ha  108 parks</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite management efforts negative impacts on important cultural heritage values are increasing or are unknown or there is little or no management undertaken to address this issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the lighthouse sites, with the proceeds being used to support their conservation management. This practice is termed adaptive re-use and is an increasingly common means of conserving historic heritage. The NPWS utilises adaptive re-use across a range of historic heritage values from lighthouses and other maritime history such as Fort Denison, to homesteads and other historic buildings. Adaptive re-use of historic buildings, landscapes and places involves the use of places with heritage values, while retaining the cultural significance of the building or structure. It acknowledges that heritage is not static and that these places should continue to live and develop over time.

Before adaptive re-use can occur at a historic site, a conservation management plan (CMP) and a business plan must be produced. The CMP investigates the cultural significance of the entire site, the necessary maintenance and works required to conserve the site, and the interpretation and public access appropriate for the cultural significance of the site. The business plan describes the cost/benefit analysis of the proposed re-use.

Lighthouses are popular tourist attractions and provide opportunities for the public to learn about Australia’s maritime history and life in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and to enjoy the beauty of some of the most rugged sections of the NSW coastline. Access to the public at each of the NPWS lighthouses ranges from a boat tour around the Solitary Islands to guided historical tours, with accommodation available in some of the restored lighthouse keepers’ cottages. On Montague Island, the lighthouse keepers’ cottages have been renovated to provide overnight accommodation for tourists and those assisting with existing research programs (see Case study 3 on page 39). These renovations were done with the assistance of a grant from AusIndustry to help promote tourism in the region. Research tours are being developed in partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia and Charles Sturt University.

In keeping with the principles of adaptive re-use, the proceeds from the tourism opportunities provided by these lighthouses contribute to maintaining these historic buildings.

The historic South Solitary Island lighthouse on South Solitary Island Nature Reserve.
J.Winter / DEC