National Workshop on Practical Heritage Conservation Trades Skills Development & Training
Wednesday 12 September 2007
Heritage Office, NSW Department of Planning
3 Marist Place, Parramatta

9:30am  Registration & Coffee

9:45am  Welcome
Reece McDougall, Executive Director, Heritage Office

9:50am  Introductions & background to the workshop
Jim Gard’ner, Director Heritage Victoria

10:10am Questions

10:15am Developing & regaining heritage trades skills, the UK experience
part 1: how UK craft training works; problems of labour shortages and quality; systemic problems resolved; research and its impacts

John Fidler, Staff Consultant Preservation Technology, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc, Los Angeles, USA and formerly Conservation Director, English Heritage, London, UK

10:45am Discussion

11:15am Coffee

11:45am Developing & regaining heritage trades skills, the UK experience
part 2: organisational changes and collaborative effort; recruitment and retention; qualifications and incentives; other recent developments and their impacts

John Fidler, Staff Consultant, Preservation Technology, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc, USA

12:15pm Discussion

12:45pm Lunch

1:30pm Teaching trade skills
David Scannell, Course Accreditation, Officer Holmesglen TAFE, Victoria
2:15pm  The role of industry
Mary Marsland, Chair  CITB
Mark Goodchild, Master Builder’s Association

3:00pm  Afternoon tea

3:30pm  The role of amenity societies
Jacqui Goddard, National Trust NSW

4:00pm  The role of government heritage agencies
Susan Macdonald NSW Heritage Office

4:15pm  The role of owners
Deborah Kemp, Architect and heritage advisor

4:30pm  Discussion

4:50pm  Conclusions
Jim Gard’ner

Heritage Victoria support for this workshop provided through the strategy Victoria’s Heritage: Strengthening our communities
BACKGROUND PAPERS

In 2005 and 2006, the NSW Heritage Office held workshops with relevant stakeholders to discuss the decline and shortage of practical conservation skills in both the trade and professional sectors.

These workshops informed input into the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Australia’s Heritage held during 2006 and also assisted the NSW Heritage Office and other State Agencies to develop initiatives to address the issues raised and implement some of the recommendations from these workshops.

The Productivity Commission Inquiry unfortunately did not discuss the matter in any detail; however there is information to be gleaned from the numerous submissions to the Commission as part of the process that provide useful data.

Many of the over 400 submissions highlighted concerns regarding the lack of professional and traditional trades skills, and the adverse effect this was having on the heritage system at all levels. They pointed to the aging of the ‘heritage’ workforce, to the particular difficulties in regional areas, and to the lack of a national approach to remedy this national problem.

In particular, they highlighted issues such as:

- poorly targeted and inadequate education and training programs;
- inadequate access to professional support especially in regional areas;
- inconsistent provision of heritage advisers, and therefore inadequate and unreliable access to professional advice and support for owners;
- inconsistent professional capacity of local governments,

The key solutions proposed included:

- development of a National Training Strategy;
- national audit of training needs;
- establishment of specialised institutions;
- provision of post graduate and accreditation schemes;
- Development of regional training and support initiatives.

Follow up meetings at the NSW Heritage Office identified solutions across three headings through regulation, persuasion (support, guidance etc) and incentives. A copy is provided at Annexure A.

In 2007 the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand discussed these issues and it was agreed to hold this national workshop with the aim of identifying cross jurisdictional solutions.

Of particular interest to this debate has been the craft skills development work undertaken in recent years in the United Kingdom. English Heritage was tasked by the British Government to drive forward action in this area and we are fortunate to have the opportunity to hear from the designer and leader of this successful program John Fidler RIBA FRICS, Intl Assoc AIA now Staff Consultant for Preservation.
Technology with Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc in Los Angeles, USA and formerly the Conservation Director of English Heritage in London. His presentations will lead us through the British problems and solutions facing craft skills development in the heritage conservation sector and help us to focus on similar issues confronting Australian practice.