

Our objective: best practice standards for heritage conservation

Conservation Management Plans

Our goal: conservation management plans will be a standard user-friendly and practical tool in heritage management practice.

Processing Conservation Management Plans

One of the functions of the Heritage Council is to review and endorse conservation management plans. These essential documents provide a guide to the future care and use of heritage places, including any new development. Following the delegation last year by the Heritage Council of its endorsement function (with some exceptions) to the Director of the Heritage Office, the majority of conservation management plans are now endorsed under delegation rather than directly by the Heritage Council.

This year 16 conservation management plans were formally endorsed in a final or conditional form by the Heritage Council. Eighty percent of these documents were prepared for heritage items in public ownership.



Conservation management plans have been endorsed for Linnwood in Guilford and Sydney's Centennial Parklands. *Photographs by Murray Brown and Lianne Hall*

Measuring Our Performance: Conservation Management Plans

Conservation management plans provide an understanding of the significance of a heritage item, and set out management policies to conserve that significance while still providing for the continuing evolution and use of the item.

We recommend that conservation management plans are prepared for heritage items of state significance, or where major changes or interventions are planned that have the potential to affect a state significant heritage place.

Year	Endorsed	Under Consideration
2001/02	24	31
2002/03	49	42
2003/04	16	82

Interpretation

This year there was a decrease in the number of conservation management plans endorsed. However, this decrease was matched by an increase in the complexity and diversity of plans being considered. At the close of the reporting year 82 plans were on hand awaiting review and consideration. In 2004-05 the new arrangements implemented this year will streamline the review process and markedly improve the timeframes.

Conservation management plans were endorsed for the following publicly-owned items:

- Burrewarra Point Beacon, Guerilla Bay
- Centennial Parklands, Sydney
- Crown Street Reservoir, Surry Hills*
- Linnwood, Guildford*
- Millennium Parklands Heritage Precinct, Sydney Olympic Park*
- Parramatta Railway Station site, Parramatta*
- Penders (Grounds and Myers Holiday Retreat) Mimosa Rocks National Park
- Quong Sin Tong Monument, Rookwood Necropolis
- Robin Hood Farm, Ingleburn
- Silverwater Correctional Complex (Mulawa), Silverwater*
- Strickland House, Vacluse*
- Sydney Opera House, Sydney
- White Bay Power Station, Leichhardt*

Conservation management plans were endorsed for the following privately-owned items:

- St David's Uniting Church, Haberfield
- St Michael's Anglican Cathedral, Wollongong*
- Trades Hall, Sydney*

Asterisked items were outsourced for review under the new scheme described below.

Conservation Management Strategies

Conservation management strategies are an abridged or shorter form of a conservation management plan. They were developed last year, and increasingly are being used for items of less complexity, where no major changes are proposed in the near future, and/or are of local rather than state significance. During the reporting year one conservation management strategy was endorsed by the Director of the Heritage Office for Dobell House at Wangi Wangi, and several others were endorsed as part of a State Heritage Register listing arising from the Central West Project.

Outsourcing of Reviews

This year we implemented a new strategy to better process the increasing number of conservation management plans being submitted to the Heritage Council for endorsement.

Contractors were engaged by the Heritage Office to assist in the reviewing and processing of plans. Fifty percent of all conservation management plans endorsed this year were reviewed in this way, indicating the management value of the outsourcing approach.

In December 2003 amendments to the *Heritage Regulation* were gazetted. Among other things, these amendments allowed the Director of the Heritage Office to issue guidelines for preparing conservation management plans, and for the Director to determine fees for the review of conservation management plans submitted for Heritage Council endorsement. These fees can be charged where the applicant agrees to review by outside parties. The outsourcing approach provided for under the regulation is expected to be fully implemented by the end of the 2004.



Centennial Parklands in Sydney.
Photograph by Lianne Hall

Conservation Practices

Our goal: provide clear guidance on best practice conservation and appropriate change and standards for works to listed heritage items.

Providing Guidance on Conserving Heritage Places

Materials Conservation

We receive many enquiries regarding materials conservation issues. This year the most common related to rising damp, cleaning paint off substrates, and cleaning masonry. The Technical Advisory Group advises the Heritage Council and the community on how to manage materials conservation issues on heritage sites.

Fire, Access and Services

This year the Heritage Office made a submission to the Commonwealth Government on the implications of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth) for heritage buildings.

We also provided technical information for 20 enquiries relating to fire, access and services. Six projects were presented to the Fire, Access and Services Advisory Panel for their advice. The panel also provided a detailed response to the Australian Building Codes Board on the *Disability Standards for Access to Premises (Buildings)*. This year technical information and answers to some of the most frequently asked questions were also prepared by the panel and published on the Heritage Office website.

The Fire, Access and Services Advisory Panel advises the Heritage Council, government agencies, design professionals, developers and owners on appropriate ways of meeting fire and access requirements and services installations in heritage buildings and sites to minimise the impact on significant spaces and heritage fabric.

Interpreting Heritage Places

Conserving our important heritage places is only part of our responsibility to future generations. Interpreting them provides insight into what makes these places special. Telling stories and communicating the significance of heritage items is an essential part of heritage conservation.

In August 2003 we commissioned consultants to prepare heritage interpretation policies and guidelines to help the community interpret heritage places and collections. Final drafts of the guidelines will be submitted for Heritage Council endorsement in December 2004.

An interpretation plan was also prepared for the Heritage Office building. A website interpreting the heritage building will be launched in 2004.

Telling Tales: Interpretation in Heritage Conservation

In November 2003 the Heritage Office co-hosted the Australia ICOMOS Annual Conference, at the North Head Artillery School, *Telling Tales: Interpretation in Heritage Conservation*. An expert workshop on heritage interpretation, held at the Heritage Office in conjunction with the conference, took advantage of the presence in Sydney of heritage professionals from all around Australia.

Conserving Shipwreck Sites

This year we continued to promote best practice standards for interaction with maritime archaeological sites. Activities included:

- a survey of the wreck of the barque *Centurion* which was shipwrecked in 1887 at the entrance to Sydney Harbour;
- a survey of a potential Aboriginal fish trap site in Middle harbour;
- preparation of a conservation management plan for the *Centurion* site and the Middle Harbour site;
- liaison with relevant dive industry representatives, and government agencies with an interest or role in the management of the *Centurion* site;
- development of online material for community access associated with the *Centurion* survey.

Conserving Cultural Landscapes

Our cultural landscapes are places that we have shaped, and those places that have shaped our culture. The Heritage Council has identified the loss of cultural landscapes as an important issue threatening cultural values and lifestyles. While cultural landscapes have been admired and observed for decades, the issues of how to best protect and manage them are only now beginning to be addressed.

This year we initiated steps to protect these important landscapes:

- a workshop was held at the Heritage Office in August 2003 on cultural landscapes to gather together key stakeholders to identify issues and actions for addressing cultural landscape management in NSW. Over 50 professionals attended the workshop. Participants identified models and case studies of leading practices in managing cultural landscapes across NSW, Australia and New Zealand;
- a *Draft Wind Farm and Heritage Policy* was developed which aims to minimise or eliminate the potential impacts of wind farms on heritage items. The new policy will be a tool to assist the Heritage Office, local government, planners and developers in their decision-making processes.

Key Strategies for Next Year

In 2004-05 we aim to:

- continue to pursue best practice standards in all aspects of conservation;
- implement the new strategies developed this year for the outsourcing and peer review of conservation management plans;
- publish in partnership with the Royal Australian Institute of Architects the guideline, *Design in Context: Guidelines for Infill Development*;
- continue to engage in the process of developing suitable mechanisms/systems for dealing with access to heritage buildings in an appropriate manner;
- present a technical seminar for heritage practitioners on materials conservation.



Delegates arrive for the Telling Tales conference on interpretation at the North Head Artillery School at Manly. Photographs courtesy of Design 5 Architects