

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

Purpose of this statement

Based on wide-ranging sector consultation this Statement provides an outline of best practice for conservation management plans (CMP). The statement includes:

- comment on the use of a CMP
- the typical contents of a CMP
- characteristics of a best practice CMP
- examples of research to support development of a CMP
- use of figures, plans and flowcharts as part of the guidance provided
- maintenance plans and schedules
- sources and references used, and appendices which, may be included
- legislative context for a plan.

This statement is informed by the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* and its associated Practice Notes, especially the notes *Understanding and assessing cultural significance* and *Developing Policy*. This statement is supported by the *Guidance on Developing a Conservation Management Plan*.

Conservation management plans are also sometimes called conservation plans or heritage management plans.

Who this statement is intended for?

This Statement is intended for:

- owners and managers of heritage items
- people involved in developing a conservation management plan

Conservation management plan or heritage asset action plan?

There are two types of document that can be used to help guide the conservation management of a heritage item. Conservation management plans (CMP) tend to be detailed, comprehensive and concise documents that provide guidance:

- about a range of conservation processes for
 - a heritage items of high significance

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

- a large or complex heritage item
- where substantial change is contemplated to a heritage item.

CMPs can be relatively short or much longer depending on factors, such as the complexity of the item.

Heritage asset action plans (formerly conservation management strategies, now a HAAP) are relatively simple and succinct documents that provide guidance about:

- the maintenance of a heritage asset or item
- a specific aspect of conservation or management
- a conservation approach that applies across an asset type
- a specific component of an item.

These may be especially suitable for items of local significance but could be useful for items of any level of significance.

The decision whether use of a CMP or HAAP should be made by the owner/manager of the heritage item, informed by their expert advisor (where necessary) and in consultation with any relevant regulatory heritage authority (i.e. Heritage NSW or the local council/government).

Use of a conservation management plan

Conservation management plans guide the use, management and change of heritage items. They should achieve the best possible conservation of heritage significance within the context of the real-world management circumstances of the item. A plan must not be written:

- with the purpose of justifying a specific project or development
- to exclusively meet the needs of users (e.g. heritage authority, owner/manager, maintenance staff).

Conservation management plans identify opportunities and problems and define solutions. For example, in preparing a plan it is vital to ask the owner/manager what are the opportunities and problems they are facing in the conservation and management of their property (e.g. is the roof leaking, is an extension being considered, are garden areas suffering from drought conditions).

Plans can be helpful to a range of possible users, including:

- owners and managers of heritage items in their ongoing management of items
- owners and managers of heritage items in communicating the importance of their heritage items
- owners and managers of heritage items when considering making changes to their heritage items
- heritage and planning authorities in considering an application to make changes
- communities with an interest in a heritage item.

CMPs are important resources when substantial changes are being considered for a heritage item and may be required as part of any formal heritage or development application. Ideally, plans would be prepared for every heritage item. However, developing a CMP can be a comprehensive process and where no or only minor changes to an item are likely, especially for an item of local significance, a CMP may not be essential, and other heritage advice or guidance may be sufficient. Seek advice from either Heritage NSW or the local council/government or heritage consultants.

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

Typical scope/contents of a conservation management plan

There are many possible formats and contents for a CMP.

Simple

In its most simple and practical form, it will include:

- an understanding of the heritage significance of the item
- a set of policies to care for and manage this significance
- guidance on managing the item in accordance with the policies.

Detailed

More detailed CMPs will typically include:

- an executive summary that summarises the main messages of the CMP (note this might be the only text that some readers look at)
- a definition of the heritage item, its curtilage and what it includes
- an outline of the process undertaken, and resources used to inform the plan, along with details of any significant gaps or limitations
- evidence of potential heritage significance, including documentary, physical and community evidence. This may include a description of the item and its history, and a comparative analysis of the heritage item in relation to similar items
- an analysis of this evidence, structured according to the NSW State Heritage Register criteria
- a statement of significance for the item and information about the significance of its components, which may include differences in the nature and level of significance
- details of factors that might affect conservation and management such as heritage significance, the condition of the item, legislation, and resources (i.e. opportunities and constraints)
- policies to guide conservation and management, including for the timeframe for the review of the plan if the changes are possible
- a list of references and sources used
- appendices with more detailed information.

Opportunities and limits

Opportunities and limits commonly highlighted in CMPs include:

- Those arising from the significance of the item (e.g. what should be protected and conserved, and what might be possible to change)
- Areas with archaeological potential
- The owner's needs and aspirations
- Legal and statutory obligations
- Availability of resources
- Operational and management requirements
- The physical condition of the item
- The uses, activities or practices essential to significance
- The ability of the item to be adapted for new uses or include modern services
- Opportunities for heritage significance to be interpreted for the community, and in support of any tourism potential (this might apply especially to publicly owned items)

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

- The contribution of the item to the identity of the community (again, this may be more relevant to publicly owned items)
- External limits – known issues arising from location, environmental conditions, political and social circumstances
- Proposed changes, new development, or potential threats
- Areas where new development could occur without impact significance
- Issues and concerns held by others, such as external stakeholders or people with associations with the item
- The setting of an item
- Other factors or future needs—the existing use/s, feasible and compatible uses, setting, location, contents, related items, and objects.

The contents of a CMP are enhanced by the use of, clear illustrations, diagrams, plans and other figures to convey information so that the length and complexity text is reduced.

Characteristics of a best-practice conservation management plan

The Heritage Council of NSW, in consultation with the heritage sector, considers that a good CMP:

- demonstrates a clear and logical flow from evidence about the item, to an analysis of that evidence, to the statement of significance, to constraints and opportunities, to the conservation management policy and actions
- is based on the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* definitions, principles and process
- meets all relevant regulations and requirements
- is developed using a range of expertise and research appropriate to the heritage item, including consultation with relevant stakeholders
- is written in plain and concise English and avoids complex technical language
- is presented with a clear understanding of the audience/s for and users of the plan, with information targeted to meet their needs
- is as short as possible while still including all necessary information
- is useful for a long period and remains fit for purpose. It will need to be revised when:
 - there is a change of use or of ownership, and mean that the heritage item will be managed differently
 - if new evidence comes to light that contributes to, or alters, the understanding of the cultural significance of the item
- provides clarity about the heritage item's extent, its boundaries, the significant area associated with the item (the curtilage), its setting, and the area of sensitivity outside of the item
- identifies key issues and opportunities with the conservation and management of the item, and provides guidance about them
- is not written with the purpose of justifying a specific project or development, although the plan should not ignore possible projects or developments. Helpful guidance may be offered consistent with the purpose of a plan (i.e. to achieve the best possible conservation of heritage significance within the context of the real-world management circumstances of the item)
- is written prior to any consideration of proposed major change or development
- avoids duplication of effort, ie incorporates existing information about the item's heritage significance, from existing statements of significance, into research

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

- includes comparisons with items with similar significance and attributes when analysing evidence to produce the statement of significance
- has a statement of significance at the heart of the plan that should:
 - **draw upon an existing robust statement of significance** where this exists (e.g. from an existing heritage listing)
 - **fairly reflect the full range of heritage** significance of the item, without unwarranted emphasis on some aspects of significance or ignoring other significance. Consider the possibility of intangible and tangible heritage, Indigenous significances, buildings, archaeological significance as well as landscapes, and to community-based or social significances
 - **be concise**. Long statements of significance can obscure an understanding of what is important, and may tend to simply repeat evidence or analysis
 - **help understand if some attributes of significance are of greater importance and why**
 - **link to attributes** which embody or convey the heritage significance, to help with conservation management
 - **provide a finer-grained understanding** of the contribution of attributes to the overall significance of the item, especially for complex items (significance grading systems are generally not required and should be used with care)
- discusses the constraints and opportunities by considering:
 - **vulnerable aspects of the item** and why they are vulnerable, including current and potential risks
 - **opportunities for appropriate future uses** in cases where a continuing or significant use is changing
 - **seeking the best fit** between changes and uses for an item, rather than forcing these onto the item.

A good CMP articulates conservation management policies that make clear what the plan is seeking to achieve or enable, and should address:

- responsible stewardship of the item
- use (especially compatible use), management and change, including minimising change and the reversibility of changes
- problems, issues as well as opportunities and limits with the conservation and management of the item
- maintenance of the item
- in the case of complex items, an asset management plan as an additional complementary tool to help guide management
- appropriate and sympathetic adaptation of and new work to the item, where necessary
- opportunities for presentation, interpretation, community engagement and celebration.

Good research underpins conservation management plans

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

A CMP must be underpinned by good research. When researching to a wide range of types and sources. Examples include:

- consultation with users and the manager of the item
- consultation with an Aboriginal community associated with the item
- measured drawings of the heritage item, including its landscape, buildings, or other potentially important attributes. Drawings might be prepared using digital or analogue techniques but must be clear and well labelled
- archaeological survey or analysis of the landscape, buildings, settings or other potentially important attributes
- geophysical investigation
- habitat or species surveys and monitoring for plants or animals
- materials analysis such as paint scrapes to determine previous colour schemes, tree-ring dating, mortar, or stone analysis
- a detailed condition survey of the landscape, buildings, or other potentially important attributes
- historical research, including oral history
- community research into social or aesthetic significance
- an assessment of a building's environmental performance
- an understanding of an item's vulnerabilities and risks.

A good approach is to establish what research and investigation is needed to inform the plan. This will require some analysis, including a preliminary review of:

- the potential heritage value to research
- the suitability of available information to inform the assessment of potential significance (e.g. there may be existing research which can be used and readily updated, including an existing statement of significance from a formal heritage listing)
- information gaps
- the item by a heritage professional with relevant expertise.

Effective heritage research requires expertise that is relevant to the significance of the item. This is supported using professionals such as historians, archaeologists and heritage architects. Detailed advice on selecting the skills and expertise relevant to an item is in *Guidance on Conservation Management Plans*.

Plans, figures, and other images

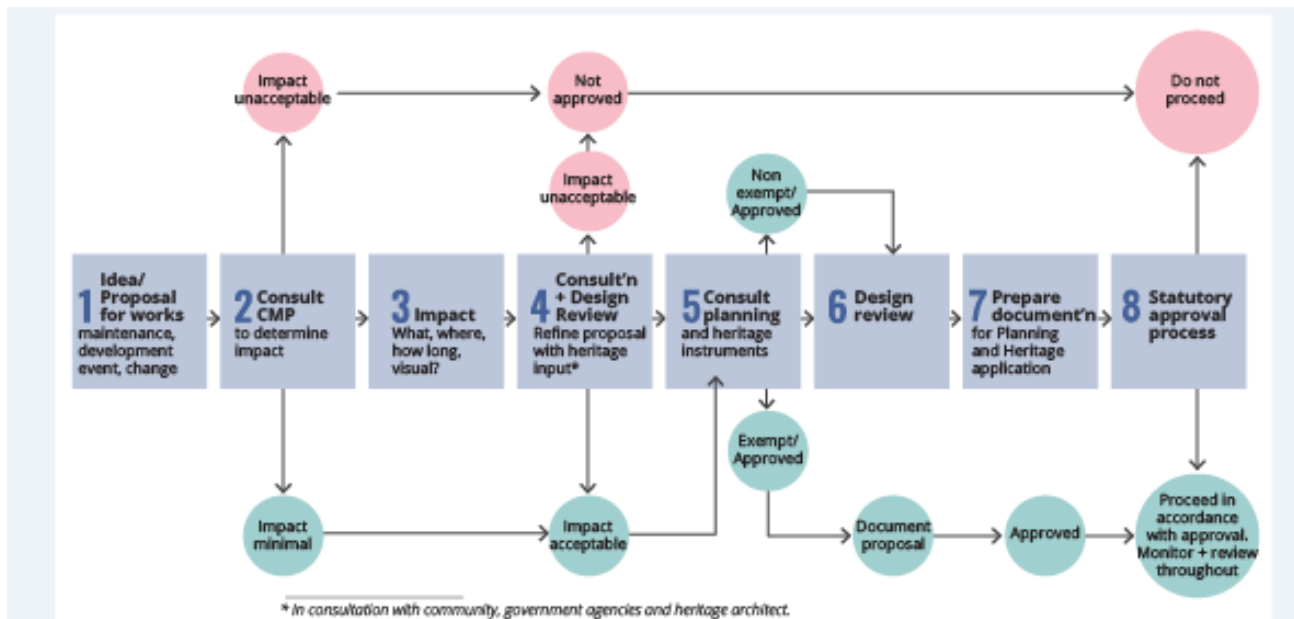
Carefully selected illustrations can help present information in an effective and engaging way. All illustrations must:

- be relevant and contribute to the presentation of information
- be clear, legible, and labelled, and appropriately annotated as needed.

The level of detail in illustrations should be appropriate and not so general that it obscures important information.

Decision-making flowcharts are a helpful tool to include in CMPs for guiding complex processes associated with the management of heritage items. One common example is how to proceed with proposed works and the formal approvals needed.

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans



Decision making flowchart

Maintenance plans and schedules

Maintenance is an essential part of the ongoing conservation management of heritage items. The plan should provide a policy framework for maintenance and if possible, recommend or include a maintenance plan and schedule that identifies:

- tasks or actions (e.g. cleaning gutters or re-painting)
- the timing or frequency for such tasks, including priority for urgent works
- who is responsible for undertaking the tasks?

Maintenance plans should consider available skills and resources, and the need to prioritise and stage work. Maintenance plans and schedules might be detailed and should be included in an appendix. For complex items they might be a separate volume to the conservation management plan.

Sources and references used

The information and decisions reached in the plan must be supported by relevant sources and references that are recorded in the plan. A standard referencing system should be used (e.g. Harvard or author-date system), with references cited in the text and a reference list provided. Any additional relevant sources/material should be listed separately.

Appendices

Conservation management plans can be relatively short documents or quite lengthy, depending on the complexity of the heritage item. In general, shorter, targeted plans are more likely to be read, understood, and used by all relevant users. Only relevant or directly useful information should be included.

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

One way to manage the length of information presented in a plan is to use appendices. This can enable shorter, targeted information to be presented in the main part of the plan, with more detail included in an appendix. Links should be made between the main part of the plan and any relevant appendices included.

Examples of appendices might include a detailed history or description, a maintenance plan and schedules, and a copy of the *Burra Charter*.

Information which just provides further interesting reading should not be included. It can be highlighted with a brief reference in the text of the plan.

Publishing and sharing the conservation management plan

Conservation management plans should be publicly available as reference documents, unless there are good reasons for confidentiality. Sharing plans promotes a wider understanding of heritage items. This should include lodgement with:

- a local public library
- the local council heritage or planning section
- the Heritage Council of NSW
- on a publicly accessible website

References

[Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and Practice Notes](#)

[Heritage Council of NSW criteria for State heritage significance](#)

[Conservation Management Plan Checklist](#)

[Conservation Management Plan Consultant Model Brief](#)

[Guidance on Developing a Conservation Management Plan](#)

Statement of best practice for conservation management plans

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