



Threads of Conservation

Social fabric • Fabric and place • Conserving fabric

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Sustaining Heritage: Viewing Heritage through a Sustainability Lens

Paper Abstract

Energy efficiency is only one aspect of sustainability, but it is often the one that we, as heritage professionals, focus on in the sustainability debate. This is primarily because, in relation to buildings, it is the focus of government policy and building legislation and, if applied without proper consideration of all aspects of a building's values, can impact negatively on our heritage buildings and their significant fabric. However, when considering all the pillars of sustainability (environmental, social, economic and cultural), there are many aspects of heritage practice that can make a very positive and recognisable contribution to the sustainable adaptation of heritage buildings.

This paper will review and evaluate heritage values, principles and practices, as expressed in the Burra Charter, against key sustainability values, principles and practices. It will interpret heritage terminology through the lens of sustainability and identify the overlaps and intersections that occur between the two, as well as the contradictions that must be addressed. It will provide a common language that can be used to promote the appropriate conservation and adaptation of our existing buildings as sustainable practice, and thus provide our built heritage with a bright and sustainable future.