



Threads of Conservation

Social fabric • Fabric and place • Conserving fabric

Australia ICOMOS Conference
5-8 November 2015
Adelaide Australia



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Donald Ellsmore is convenor of the Australasia Chapter of the Association for Preservation Technology International (APT). A conservation specialist and educator with more than 35 years heritage conservation experience, including advising on works to many landmark Australian heritage places for state and federal Government agencies and in his own practice, he trained as an architect in Australia and France. In 1993 he was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy by the University of York. He is now actively involved in skills development and capacity building activities in Australia and South East Asia.

Donald Ellsmore is the author of a proposed quality framework for sustainable heritage conservation in Australia. Australia ICOMOS endorses the inclusion of quality measures in the development of Burra Charter Practice Notes.

Designing a Quality Framework for Sustainable Heritage Conservation

Paper Abstract

The heritage system that has evolved nationwide over the past four decades has largely satisfied the needs of communities in protecting their heritage but it has failed to deliver consistently good outcomes. The high quality of conservation planning that goes into the front end of many projects is not matched at the back end with performance controls or monitoring to assure good outcomes. This situation can be improved by the use of quality measures to inform the whole process and quality controls to assure adherence to standards.

The development of the Burra Charter and the promotion of conservation management planning processes, now widely recognised and respected, has created a false sense that they represent the sum total of heritage conservation when, patently, this was never the intention. Indeed the Charter and the CMP process both make provision for the things that are routinely neglected today, such as detailed analyses, works in accordance with significance, employment of correct skills and techniques, cautious approach, (safe, reversible, sustainable interventions), minimal works, recording, on-going maintenance and monitoring.

The weakness lies in the fact that, in relative terms, too much effort goes into the planning of works and not enough attention is paid to the quality of the execution of works. This situation could be rectified by the use of quality measures to define and determine outcomes and to put all conservation actions into a self-regulating quality framework.

Quality frameworks are used successfully in other sectors in Australia to obtain quality outcomes. Australia ICOMOS recognises this. It will develop quality measures in conjunction with practice notes to the Burra Charter as a first step towards a national framework. In this paper a design proposal for a national quality framework for sustainable conservation of heritage places will be described. Examples of quality measures will be introduced and examples provided to illustrate how the framework would achieve the objective of improving the quality and sustainability of conservation outcomes at heritage places.