

Tracking Through Australian Forests*

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Introduction

Aim

In the forests of Australia, tracks are one manifestation of past and current human activity. Australia's forests, ranging from woodlands to rainforests, are largely found today in rugged terrains that have not been cleared for agriculture. Most remaining forests are found on the steep escarpment of the Great Dividing Range, which is a formidable barrier to human communication. The tracks are therefore evidence of human resourcefulness as they thread their way over steep landscapes imbued with countless layers of use and reuse.

Tracks were identified and many are now protected as part of the extensive Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) conducted throughout Australia that identified a total of 1365 cultural heritage places. Of these 130 were tracks or routes. Apart from the identified tracks, numerous other tracks were not individually identified but are within large heritage areas such as national parks, scenic reserves, mining areas and other historic landscapes. The nature of tracks varies but they all result from three broad types of activity:

- people travelling through forests to go from one place to another;
- people going to go into forests to exploit their resources, from food, to wood from trees to minerals;
- people undertaking pilgrimages for scientific, aesthetic and spiritual journeys.

Drawing on the results of the RFAs, in this paper we look at issues about the identification and management of tracks in the Australia's forests. We also examine whether regarding tracks as cultural landscapes - thin, long cultural landscapes - provides a greater opportunity in managing their heritage values.

People and forests

It is now understood that Australia has lost 50% of the forests it had prior to European settlement in 1788, therefore many of the tracks, roads, routes that exist outside forests today, were once tracks in forested areas. There is archaeological evidence of human settlement in the forests and the use of forest resources from earliest times, including before some of the current forests emerged at the end of the last Ice Age. This evidence and oral history shows that tracks in forests range from Indigenous hunting and gathering pathways and spiritual pathways for ceremonial purposes, through to routes formed by early European explorers and settlers for the movement of people and stock, and the exploitation of forest resources. Today some have become major highways and others are used for recreational purposes.

Regional Forest Agreements

Forests tracks have been recorded in the past by heritage and land management agencies, and also by groups such as the Victorian Light Rail Association. However, it was the comprehensive effort of the cultural heritage assessments for the RFAs from 1993 to 2000 that permitted the full network of forest routes to emerge.

Australia's RFA program was conducted in 12 forest regions in the states of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia (Figure 1). The program was central to the National Forest Policy Strategy, agreed in 1992 by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, to mitigate conflict between timber industry and conservation interests in Australian forests. Each RFA provides certainty for 20 years on a sustainable forest industry and improved standards of protection and conservation for wilderness, old growth, biodiversity and heritage. Each RFA undertook some 50 projects to comprehensively identify values ranging from extensive natural environment values, rare and endangered species, indigenous and non-indigenous heritage places and values, as well as economic and social values, including recreation and tourism.

Tracking down tracks: identification

Process of identification

The identification of cultural heritage places and values within forests for each RFA varied but broadly followed a standard formula:

- audits of cultural heritage information conducted in each region to review the representation of historic forest themes, the limits of the available information and gaps in the information knowledge;
- forest disturbance histories developed from government records of mining, farm selecting and ringbarking, and saw-log allocations provided valuable information (Victoria only); and
- extensive studies of social value, aesthetic value, timber industry places, small forest industry places and other historic themes, were commissioned to fill the gaps.

The audits revealed that routes of human movement were a notable gap requiring research. The forest assessments, East Gippsland, Central Highlands and Queensland (Grinbergs 1993; Watt 1994; Powell 1998) conducted specific studies of tracks or routes of human movement. In other RFAs tracks and routes were identified within the context of all the cultural heritage studies, which also included community heritage workshops and Indigenous heritage meetings and workshops.

Various agreed methods and techniques were used to assist the identification process including the Principal Australian Historic Themes and a range of forest-related sub-themes focussed research. These themes cover different aspects of human activity such as 'utilising forest resources' and 'managing forest resources'. The themes along with the types of places that resulted from the activities such as plantations, logging snig tracks and chutes, forest workers camps, logging tramways, arboreta, sawmills were used to evaluate the cultural heritage record in the audit process and direct

research projects to fill gaps. Lists of these projects are in each RFA National Estate report (available on the RFA web site).

Tracks are manifest throughout the forests in many forms. They range in length from clusters of short branching and sub-branching timber industry tramways to the 963-km Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia, that extends from Albany to Perth. Routes that were not used for the movement of goods and people such as survey lines and aqueducts were also recorded.

Assessing Tracks

Once identified, the heritage significance of tracks was assessed according to the Australian Heritage Commission Significance Criteria (Attachment 1). Many had more than one heritage value.

Historic values

The historic research studies identified numerous tracks associated with timber harvesting, mining, small forest industries and moving goods. Explorers and surveyors routes were recorded and many had features such as bridges, viaducts, retaining walls and tunnels that have been recorded for their individual importance. Some examples are:

- First settlement routes such as the convict built Great North Road (North East, NSW); and the unusual convict track unrelated to the common historic themes was the convict-powered tramway on Tasman Peninsula (Tas).
- Explorer routes include the Hume and Hovell Track (North-East NSW) and Cunningham's Gap and Highway (South-East, Qld).
- Trade and stock routes that were important to primary industry such as the Corn Trail or Wool Road (Southern region, NSW), Dungey's Track (North East, Vic) and McEvoy's Track (Gippsland, Vic).
- Gold rush tracks are particularly prevalent in the Central Highlands of Victoria, such as the Jamieson Track and the Yarra Track but that also exist on Mt Dromedary, NSW.
- Railways such as the Border Loop (North East, NSW) and the Bairnsdale - Orbost Line (East Gippsland, Vic) were identified in most regions.
- Numerous logging tramways were also identified in most regions but were more prevalent in Victoria's Central Highlands and West regions, and in Tasmania.

Aesthetic value

The beauty and romantic nature of forests has been conveyed to a receptive public for generations. Nineteenth century artists such as Eugene von Guerard, Louis Buvelot, Conrad Martens and others, used tracks as a metaphor in their paintings - the track provided scale to convey the sheer size of the forest trees and also as an aesthetic lure tempting the viewer into the mystery of forests. The aesthetic value research identified many individual routes and tracks and recognised countless others that are found in the large area listings of parks and reserves. However, although the aesthetic experience enjoyed by bushwalkers on forest tracks was noted at the numerous community heritage workshops, the research into art and literature provided minimal links to any extant forest tracks. Some examples are:

- The Australian Alps Walking Track, extending from Walhalla through four RFA regions (Gippsland, Vic to the ACT)
- Dargo High Plains Road (Gippsland, Vic)
- Old Stock Routes and Explorer Routes in the Jindabyne Area, (Southern NSW)
- The Yarra Road and Mundaring Weir Road (South West, WA)
- Beechworth Forest Drive, (North East, Vic).

Social value

Tracks with social value were also identified at numerous community workshops and included well-known historic tracks and scenic bushwalking routes. Some were tracks or routes with an association to famous figures or a popular humorous tale. They also included a number of recreation tracks that have been purposely created to link historic or scenic features, that have been developed on former railway lines and others that may have been inspired by community and commemorative action. Many of the original mining tracks are now valued and used by cyclists, hunters, motorbike riders, four-wheel drivers and horse riders. Some examples are:

- Bicentennial Track (South East, Qld to Vic)
- Hume and Hovell Track (NSW to Vic)
- Bibbulmun Track (South West, WA)
- Rail Trail Mirboo-Boolara (Gippsland, Vic)
- BB (Bare Buttocks / Bare Breeches) Track (Central Highlands, Vic)

Scientific value

The entry of the East Gippsland RFA places in the Interim List of the Register of the National Estate in 2000, revealed several track areas identified as having heritage significance for their natural values, such as flora and fauna richness, or rare and threatened habitats or geological values. These places demonstrate the utilisation of historic tracks, often mining tracks, to access the forests for scientific research. They include Little River Track Area, Gold Mine Track Area and the Native Cat Track Geological Area.

Tracks as landscapes

In identifying tracks and routes and their values it becomes clear that they are in fact cultural landscapes - although thin linear versions. They can be described according to the international categories of cultural landscapes, such as used by the World Heritage Convention Operational Guidelines:

- evolved, continuing or relict;
- designed;
- associative.

The definitions for these landscapes are provided at Attachment 2 and the types of forest tracks sorted to the categories are illustrated in Figure 2. Examples of tracks sorted to these categories are outlined at Figure 3. Although many tracks fit into more than one category, the classification assists in understanding places and their respective management issues. This analysis was not undertaken during the RFAs but

is being considered as an aspect of this paper to evaluate the usefulness of the international cultural landscape definitions for tracks.

RFA Area	Evolved Tracks	Designed Tracks (Purpose Built)	Associative
Victoria:			
East Gippsland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Snowy River Road-Ingegoodbee Track ▪ The Old Coast Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bairnsdale - Orbost Railway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Wonnangatta Track</i>
Central Highlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jamieson-Woods Point Road Mining Area ▪ Yarra Track, Blacks Spur & Maroondah H'way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alexander Timber Industry Complex and Lineal System ▪ Kirchubels Sawmill and Tramway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blacks Spur ▪ <i>Howitts Treck</i> ▪ <i>Strezlecki's Track</i> ▪ <i>BB Track</i>
North East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beechworth Forest Drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kiewa HES Bogong High Plains Road ▪ Australian Alps Walking Track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Baldwin Spencer Route,</i> ▪ <i>Ned Kelly Country - Powers Lookout</i>
Gippsland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dargo High Plains Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mirboo North - Boolarra Rail Trail ▪ Australian Alps Walking Track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Wonnangatta Track</i> ▪ Grand Ridge Road ▪ Dargo High Plains Road
West		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lyons Tramway Trentham ▪ Glut Escarpment wagon track and log chute 	
Tasmania			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Winterbrook (Black Bluff) Sawmill & Tramway ▪ McMullens Leithbridge Tramway ▪ Tasman Peninsula Tramway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overland Track
New South Wales:			
Eden NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cow Bail Trail 		
North East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cut Rock Track ▪ Great North Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Border Loop Railway ▪ Long Creek Village, Sawmill & timber Tramway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Horse Trail ▪ Acacia Plateau Bridle Track
Southern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wog Wog Track and Yards ▪ Wool Road ▪ Hume and Hovell Walking Track ▪ Corn Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Australian Alps Walking Track 	
South West Western Australia:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bridle Track 	Bibbulmun Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mundaring Weir Track
South-East Queensland:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Bicentennial Heritage Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cunningham's Gap and Highway

Figure 3: Selected examples of Forest Tracks illustrating the cultural landscape classification. (Note: those in italics were not plotted)

Evolved

Many tracks are a palimpsest of a variety of uses that have changed the track through time. Simple Indigenous footpaths were used as bridle routes by horse-riding explorers, then later defined as packhorse tracks with prescribed gradients and used by miners and scientists. Later some were widened by loggers for bullock teams to accommodate their turning areas. Some became coach routes, often of corduroy construction, and some later became motor vehicle routes. While many of these

evolved tracks are now no longer in use, others have a continuing life as a major highway.

An example of an evolved track now entered in the RNE is the Ingegoodbee Track. It was in the Ngarigo people's territory and it is 'highly probable that it was an actively maintained Indigenous pathway between the Gelantipy district and the Monaro' (Grinbergs 1993). It was used from the 1830s to 1950s by cattlemen, settlers and goldminers, and its importance accentuated by the establishment of a Customs House at Willis. Part of the track now forms the Snowy River Road while the higher steeper section was closed as a road in the 1950s.

Designed

Designed tracks are primarily purpose-built routes such as, railways, timber industry tramways, fire management trails and hydro-electric roads, many of which are now no longer in use. It is important to note that some of the trestle bridges, constructed for both tramways and railways were outstanding achievements of vernacular engineering. Other designed track features included swing bridges, culverts, and railway tunnels. Numerous purpose-built recreation routes were found to have social significance during the RFA process. Some of these were established for a political or commemorative purpose but as a group they are becoming more prevalent and increasingly popular.

Associative

Tracks with associative values for Indigenous people still exist as highly valued secret-sacred dreaming tracks including initiation paths. For other Australians, associative value includes an ongoing connection with land use, such as the timber industry or recreational use. Associative value also links communities with past ways of life, often romanticised, with folk-lore and myths blending into the dramatic forested landscape as typified in the 'Man from Snowy River' syndrome. However, community workshops also revealed the intense spiritual meaning that journeys in forests hold for many people today.

Common to all these categories is that tracks have been changed over time, by their use, or in their structure. For example, associative landscapes such as Indigenous spiritual paths were appropriated for routes by explorers and settlers, who may even, have murdered or massacred the very people who made those tracks. In other instances, tracks used for the exploitation of minerals and timber have become bushwalkers' tracks, the trails of those individuals who subsequently fought for National Park gazettal to conserve the forests and their resources from destruction. Therefore the category of cultural landscape these tracks match has also changed.

Thus some associative value landscapes have become an evolved landscape, even eventually having purpose-built features. Such constant use and reuse of tracks is hardly surprising and demonstrate that ease of access is a primary factor in the choice of this successive use.

Identification issues

Unmapped tracks

Many tracks were identified from historical records, oral histories or from community workshops but their actual location is hard to identify. The routes of the explorers and scientist such as von Mueller and Baldwin Spencer could not be listed in the RFAs because they could not be accurately plotted. Future research or discoveries of archival material may identify the location of many tracks but until then they will remain as history without place. However, the Tasmanian Forest Commission has spent time and money to fully identify the Van Diemen's Land Company Track that extends from Mole Creek to the large land tracts south of Burnie given to the company in 1824. Originally surveyed in 1824, the track was used until the early twentieth Century. The accurate location of the route was plotted using remote sensing, old, maps, county charts and surveyors reports. It will be protected from future logging and ultimately opened up for recreation. (pers. Comm.. Gaughwin 2001)

In other cases the value of the track is associative and not expressed in the physical fabric of a track. For such tracks an historical association floats myth-like across the landscape but has not been accurately pinpointed to anything on the ground. As forests have been a refuge for the lawless, such activity is nowadays regarded as heroic, fitting comfortably with the 'Man from Snowy River' as colourful myths and embellished stories that link people to the land. The Ned Kelly Gang made use of the forests although their actual tracks are not known. The cattlemen's bypass of the tollway at the Willis Customs House is now part of folklore but the by-pass tracks were not accurately plotted.

Some Indigenous tracks through forests are known and were noted but due to desires of the relevant traditional land custodians they were not documented for a heritage register, their location being kept confidential.

Unidentified tracks and values

It must be emphasised that despite the huge resources allocated to cultural heritage in the RFA forest only some of the known tracks have been identified and delineated in the heritage records and maps. This needs to be stressed for the future in case it is assumed that all heritage places, including tracks, have indeed been identified.

Track numbers recorded were unevenly distributed across the RFAs with a high percentage being in Victoria. This is most likely due to more focused research having been undertaken in Victoria, rather than that State having more tracks.

As the discussion of tracks as cultural landscapes shows, many tracks consist of several phases of use. It is essential that the values and physical elements related to past use is fully identified in order that the track can be managed according to all those values.

Keeping track: management

RFA commitments

The RFAs were made jointly between the relevant State Premiers and Prime Minister. These agreements all contain commitments to various management principles, processes and guidelines for the protection and management of heritage places and values, including the identified tracks. Although each Regional Forest Agreement differs slightly in those commitments, broadly they all include:

- that the places identified as having heritage significance will be listed as part of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission;
- that the States will protect certain places and values in conservation reserves, such as national parks, and in other cases, off-reserve management prescriptions will be applied to heritage values or addressed through statutory planning processes and the application of guidelines and national standards, including the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* (cited in all Agreements); and
- monitoring and measuring ecological sustainable forest management to be undertaken based on the internationally accepted criteria, the *Montreal Indicators*, annual reporting of government parties on their commitments, and a review of each RFA every five years.

Improved and more consistent management guidelines across the States were a major focus of work on cultural heritage for the RFAs. These built on an array of management measures and prescriptions, such as codes of forest practice and forest management plans for State forests, and management plans for national parks, that existed before the RFAs, but which may not have explicitly considered cultural heritage. The RFAs developed new processes with all stakeholders after analyses and comparison of current land and cultural heritage management processes against national standards, including the Burra Charter. The resultant guidelines include new and improved systems for land managers requiring input from stakeholders such as Indigenous groups. Processes range from a simple set of instructions for land managers to protect places by avoiding unnecessary interference, to the requirements for conservation plans for other heritage places with complex values where intervention is inevitable.

Management practice

The RFA framework provides for management of heritage, including tracks, which varies according to both the values of the place and how the track is being used. The two main forms of public land tenure in which tracks in forests are now located are national parks or conservation reserves, and state forests. Other forms of tenure apply especially to tracks in use, such as vehicular roads that are managed by shire councils or the State main roads body.

Prescription management

The RFAs now ensure that either land use for timber exploitation or for natural environment protection and recreation must be conducted in a manner to comply with heritage protection of significant places. Various prescriptions are now being implemented especially for cultural heritage places some being particularly applicable

to tracks. These measures and how they relate to broader management processes in Victoria are illustrated at Figure 4.

Similar arrangements apply in RFA forests in other States. As an example, RFA heritage tracks in State forests are now enshrined routes through forests and timber harvesting is not allowed near them. Prior to coupe harvesting, reconnaissance surveys are conducted and specific management measures such as buffers established around significant places.

However, these management processes can only be implemented after a place has been fully recorded and mapped in more detail than some RFAs were able to achieve. Such mapping of tracks is therefore the first step in conserving tracks. In Victoria, where tramways have been identified and delineated on maps in State Forests, and forest managers will protect them with buffers of 10-15 m (pers. Comm.. Catrice 2001). Similarly in national parks heritage tracks where identified are protected. If interpreted and used for recreation their upkeep is a high cost investment which may include boardwalks, bridges, composting toilets and water tanks.

Indigenous heritage management

Although generally Indigenous heritage places and values are included in prescription management, a special case was made for Indigenous heritage places as part of the final Agreements. In most RFAs agreed strategies committed State governments to the ongoing involvement of relevant Indigenous communities in the forest management process.

In some RFAs, the 'clearance' model was proposed, for example in South-East Queensland, rather than identifying and mapping heritage places including tracks. This model supported by many Indigenous native title representative bodies (see www.nntt.gov.au) does not identify heritage places or values ahead of development or land use, or if so, only in broad sensitivity zones. Instead, it ensures ongoing Indigenous input, requiring them to 'clear' which areas of forest are suitable for different uses, for example, recreation may be possible in some areas with small camp sites, but not where there are confidential / secret-sacred sites including tracks. This model is therefore particularly practical in allowing Indigenous groups to control their heritage and traditional knowledge, and have a direct input into commenting on impacts on different heritage places and values.

Track conservation

Onus has been placed on forest officers or parks rangers to gain knowledge of cultural heritage so that if places are happened upon they can be adequately recorded and reported to heritage specialists within their agency or to heritage agencies. To assist forest officers in the day-to-day management of cultural heritage places, some RFA guidelines were prepared such as the *Guidelines for the management of cultural heritage values in the forests, parks and reserves of East Gippsland* (Natural Resources and Environment 1997).

In other cases, simple appropriate heritage conservation measures have been initiated to conserve values where specific heritage conservation problems are known. For example, at Graves Telegraph Tramway in West Victoria, damage by tree roots caused the collapse of the tramway cutting with names of workers and dates engraved

on its sides. Selective hand removal of trees on the cutting was carried out in order to protect this unique feature (pers. comm. Catrice 2001). In NSW, the Great North Road has a detailed Conservation Management Plan for some parts of it (National Parks and Wildlife Service 1999). In the case of the sections of the Road within the National Park, road management has caused a lot of direct and incremental loss of significant fabric. This is now controlled but involves a much greater maintenance budget than would otherwise be spent (pers. comm. Gojak 2001).

The visual management measures of retaining buffer strips of forest alongside tracks referred to above, have in some cases had unforeseen consequences resulting in special conservation management. When neighbouring coupes are cut, the exposed narrow strips of forest have caused wind throw damage to the track from falling trees. Hand cutting of selected trees in the buffers has been undertaken to protect track features.

One form of conservation is ongoing use, for example the reuse or special development as recreational walking tracks, especially but not only, in national parks. Often they are extremely long and have numerous management challenges relating to the many different land tenures they cross. Such walking tracks require monitoring and upgrading, re-routing to allow impacted natural environments to recover, and the installation of composting toilets, water tanks, metal or timber walkways, signage and interpretation.

An example of this is the Bibbulmun Track in WA that crosses small areas of private land, local government areas, as well as eight different CALM management areas in its almost 1000 km length. CALM has established a small co-ordinating unit, that is in constant contact with the various land managers, including the private property owners, with whom Deeds of Right easements have been negotiated, as well as with the Friends of Bibbulmun Track who provide invaluable management support. The Track has been operating since 1998 and the total maintenance cost is between \$140,000 and \$160,000 (pers. comm. Keating 2001).

In NSW national parks management, the best and most notable work has been done in the Blue Mountains, where there are large system of tracks some of which date back more than a century. These have specific developmental histories tied in to tourism and individual entrepreneurs' efforts as well as semi-legendary bushwalkers like Paddy Pallin. There has been a broad conservation assessment of the tracks and more specific section by section management planning for some of these. The main issues appear to be meeting conflicting demands of public safety, conservation of earlier fabric, including sculpted Yogi-Bear style concrete park furniture, and greatly increased wear and tear (pers. comm. Gojak 2001).

One issue for bushwalkers is understanding and appreciating the meaning behind this diversity of tracks and the potential muddling that taking an easy pedestrian shortcut can have on understanding a bullock track. In several areas, original routes down an escarpment that were initially bridle trails were moved to accommodate better gradients for bullock drays, and then again shifted in location for motor transport. This results in 4-5 separate strands of track that are roughly parallel each following a gradient and a route that they can manage for a specific purpose, and then they converge into a single alignment in easy country (pers. comm. Gojak 2001).

Management issues

Management issues are broad ranging and generally similar to those for other heritage places and values, from statutory issues, lack of funding, and natural threats, whilst other issues relate particularly to tracks. Many of these issues were recognised and addressed in the RFAs, yet remain potential problems until all commitments are fully implemented.

Natural damage

Management of tracks in large 'natural' landscapes requires special consideration of natural physical risks. Tracks are often cut into forest soils, making them highly vulnerable to rain wash erosion. Although some of the packhorse mountain tracks have survived surprisingly well, usually where gravel surfacing has been employed, side features can be readily eroded, such as the stone retaining walls constructed by the Depression 'sustenance' workers along the Snowy River Road, Victoria.

Unprotected tracks

Various management and administrative inconsistencies potentially damage tracks and their values:

- Lack of statutory protection - In many cases heritage places found in forests do not meet State heritage criteria and therefore may not be listed under State legislation. Whilst the RFAs made a commitment to their listing in the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate as well as to the protection of these national estate places and values in the forests by the States, little statutory protection is actually in place. This is because so far only places in the East Gippsland RFA have been registered.
- Cross-tenure / cross jurisdiction matters - This issue is particularly a problem for tracks, where ideally consistent management plans and conservation decisions need to be made jointly by all land managers. The Australian Alps Walking Track exemplifies tenure issues. In Kosciuszko National Park in New South Wales, it follows established former roads and can be used by mountain bikes. Yet in Victoria it follows some old established routes but also has new track sections that are restricted to foot use only, therefore the use of mountain bikes stops at the Victorian border. As well in Victoria, part of the track passes through State forest areas where upkeep and management is given a low priority (pers. comm. Rowe 2001).
- Lack of on-ground procedures - Despite the guidelines that have been developed, until all RFA initiatives are actually implemented and land managers become trained in the changes and the processes for cultural heritage, some heritage places, including tracks may not be fully protected.

Unclear heritage values

When the heritage values are not made clear by the management and administrative processes, certain values of tracks may not be properly taken into consideration in management:

- Roads and Roadside Features - Regular modifications and upgrading to modern road requirements severely risks earlier fabric. When features are part of the road

such as retaining walls it is likely that they will be changed in upgrading works. Other roadside features such as road workers' camps are vulnerable to scavenging.

- Tracks within extensive heritage areas - incomplete understanding or recognition of all the values and elements of a heritage place is particularly applicable to extensive heritage places that include tracks. For example, in a mining area the management focus might be on individual features within the broader place, such as mining features, and exclude the linking tracks which are an integral part of that heritage place.
- Lack of Conservation Plans - certain heritage places including tracks require full conservation plans to be developed, that apply the *Burra Charter* process to protect and conserve their values.

Unidentified tracks

- Timber Harvesting Areas - Unknown tracks are more likely to be at risk of being impacted. Access to forest coupes is generally via contours that were often used as routes in the past, thus existing heritage tracks, such as pack horse tracks are often widened, upgraded and reused, resulting in their extant heritage features and physical character being destroyed.
- National Parks - Some view that tracks in parks and reserves used for recreation are more secure as physical risks are said to be less. Nonetheless, there are various issues regarding tracks and their maintenance. In some national parks in NSW where track use is downgraded there can be the loss of definition and erosion by neglect, trees growing into the middle of an area, the roadside clearings, and sometimes within fencing. Another major issue in NSW national parks is the number of older tracks within newer national parks that are either being closed because the tracks allow traffic access to areas where parks management do not want vehicles to go, or they are selectively upgraded into fire trails. Upgrading usually means grader scraping which can potentially destroy cobbled surfaces, clog up culverts and drainage (pers. comm. Gojak 2001).

Lack of funding

Funding for heritage conservation, including for land management agencies has been reduced. Cultural heritage, including tracks therefore has to compete with natural environment values for agency funds. Heritage grants have also been cut and as these are often acquired and managed by community groups, this limits both the potential of gaining community knowledge of unidentified places and values as well as ongoing community involvement in management.

Down the track: future paths for forest tracks

RFA advantages for tracks

The integration of cultural heritage in a major national 'biodiversity-driven' program such as the RFAs was a considerable achievement, and there are several other major gains in the RFAs for cultural heritage in forests, including tracks.

The RFAs funded and implemented a regional focus on heritage research and identification with a strong level of community interaction. The RFAs benefited from communities' local knowledge and enthusiastic level of support that resulted in a

greatly expanded community awareness of their local heritage, as well as important information for management.

The RFAs were very well resourced and regionally comprehensive, despite not being able to cover every possible topic or ground-truth every potential heritage site. This information, collected in one short span of time, is therefore of considerable research importance and potential, and is available on-line (www.rfa.gov.au) and as hard copy reports in agency libraries.

The whole of government approach that included Premier and Prime Minister commitment, key land agencies, as well as cultural bodies, resulted in a broad level of acceptance of and commitment to cultural heritage at Commonwealth and State levels for 20 years. Nonetheless, what form of Commonwealth statutory recognition may take place is unknown, given the proposed changes to the Commonwealth heritage regime.

Risks and possibilities

Integrated approach

A potential dissipation of the RFA integrated approach to the protection of all values in forests is a potential threat to cultural heritage in forests including tracks. Traditionally land managers have generally tended to disregard cultural heritage. Similarly, environmental conservationists have also had a focus on forests from a 'green', wilderness perspective that does not recognise cultural places and values. In the past, this has been antithetical to cultural heritage in extensive natural areas including forests.

The current resurgence of environmental issues at the political level, such as the WA Liberals for Forests, will encourage governments to abide by their commitments to biodiversity and wilderness values in forests. However, this environmentally-friendly focus may threaten the gains in the RFAs for cultural heritage, or at least, require the need for the case for an integrated management approach to be re-stated.

Tourism

Tourism as always provides both an opportunity and a threat to the protection and conservation of heritage places and values. The recreation use of tracks for tourism such as walking tracks provides an ongoing use that is in many cases similar to their original use. There is also a potential in such a use to interpret a track's past story and associated values, such as with the Hume and Hovell Walking Track. Such uses are seen as positive for visitors by land managers, and thus assist their appreciation of cultural places and values.

However, the push for tourists and tourism funds in regional Australia can also corrupt and damage a track's real value by mythologising the landscape. This is the case in North-East Victoria, with the 'Man from Snowy River' myth immortalising mountain cattlemen and mountain droving tracks. This is a common trend, with many originally utilitarian tracks gaining both notoriety and fame through associations, which may or may not be historically accurate. Such legends are in some cases overtaking and obscuring the real stories of past achievements.

Local communities

Although RFAs achieved a commitment to the ongoing involvement of relevant Indigenous communities in decision-making and management of their heritage places and values in forests, this was not sought for local non-Aboriginal communities. This is despite their knowledge and values having been sought at community heritage workshops.

This valuable enthusiasm needs to be respected and sustained, with opportunities found to tap into this energy and knowledge. An example of its benefits is shown in the example of one community member, who through encouragement from a community meeting, researched her mountain cattlemen family activities and plotted numerous droving routes through the Victorian Alps, providing a most useful reference for local history.

Cultural landscape categories

Classifying tracks by the cultural landscape categories may have limited usefulness. The ongoing reuse of tracks results in a blurring of the distinctions between the landscape categories that does not readily assist management. However, these categories can provide a better understanding of the nature and history of tracks and their heritage values that may better define potential management issues and highlight problems for conservation planning, for example:

- Evolved tracks in timber harvesting areas may not be recognised for all the elements that have resulted from their changes through time, and therefore their values risk impact from upgrading or from continuing use or from being appropriated for use as timber tracks.
- Designed tracks need to have all their features identified in any conservation plan, including in conventional maintenance works.
- Tracks with associative value may risk having their values distorted for and by tourism.

Making Tracks: Conclusion

Forest tracks tell a continuous story of the Australian landscape from the traditional pathways of Indigenous people to the intensive land-use and settlement of European settlers, in their acquisition of land and resource wealth. The story includes adventure, scientific endeavour and romance. The roads and routes left on the maps and currently in use are only a fraction of what existed in the past.

Nonetheless, forest tracks have benefited from the considerable resources and commitment allocated to their identification and protection in the RFAs. The lessons learnt in this process may assist other projects in Australia or elsewhere. A key message is that managers need to be aware that tracks and their values are constantly changing and management processes need to take this into account. The most important message is that tracks are both tangible and intangible heritage assets. Keeping them is a social investment for the future.

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