

Australia ICOMOS Victorian Scholarship 2009 – Report

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Australia ICOMOS awarded each of us a share of the \$5000 Victorian Scholarship to attend the Cultural Heritage Management Summer School at the University of Canberra from 17 to 23 January 2010.

In attending the summer school we hoped to develop a better understanding of more holistic conceptions of heritage, as it is an industry that has historically been separated according to its natural, built and Aboriginal values. We were also eager to learn about contested issues in contemporary heritage management; such as social significance, intangible heritage and the planning and management of heritage tourism.

Presenters and Participants

The summer school was hosted by the Donald Horne Institute of Cultural Heritage and coordinated by David Young.



David Young

The Institute invited leading heritage practitioners from around Australia to present on their areas of expertise. These presenters included:

- Ilse Wurst from the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts on recent developments in Commonwealth heritage legislation;
- Robyn Taylor, Heritage Advisor and Planner, SA and Paul Stark, SA Department of Local Government and Heritage on heritage planning at the coalface;
- Chris Johnston, Context Pty Ltd on involving the community and social significance;
- Sandy Blair and Nicholas Hall, heritage consultants on heritage tourism;
- Elizabeth Beckmann, interpretation consultant on heritage interpretation;
- Gavin Andrews and Frances Bodkin, D'harawal descendants on Aboriginal heritage and cultural landscape planning.

Summer School participants came from a variety of professional backgrounds and disciplines such as architecture, history, building and construction, archaeology and engineering. The Commonwealth, states and territories were all represented, with the exception of the Northern Territory. The majority of participants were employed in the public sector at State and Commonwealth levels. Although there were no local government employees present, the perspectives put forward by attendees were varied and enhanced group discussion. For example, the experience of heritage management outlined by employees of the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area, Norfolk Island contrasted sharply with that described by public servants from capital cities.

Content

The summer school commenced with a comprehensive examination of the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter*. The philosophies of heritage conservation in Australia set down in this document provided the framework for discussion of the many facets of heritage management presented over the duration of the summer school.

Examples of the Burra Charter's application were presented by Paul Stark and Robin Taylor who referred to their work at the City of Adelaide and the South Australia Department of Planning and Local Government. The practicalities of applying this philosophy to the built environment provoked lively discussion.

Heritage legislation

Ilse Wurst gave a comprehensive outline of heritage legislation at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels, with particular emphasis on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Participants discussed the different legislation in their states and the implications for management of cultural heritage.

Interpretation

One of the disciplines covered in the summer school was the interpretation of heritage. Dr Elizabeth Beckmann introduced this increasingly important field which assists in revealing the significant values enshrined in our natural and built environment. We were able to examine, compare and evaluate examples of interpretation methods on a number of our site visits. These examples included interpretive signage, displays, guided tours and other media.

Heritage tourism

Heritage tourism and interpretation are inextricably linked by the objective of communicating heritage values to enhance the visitor experience. Sandy Blair and Nicholas Hall described ways of planning and implementing heritage tourism and outlined a number of existing marketing strategies and tourism experiences. Sandy and Nicholas facilitated examination of a case study. The class was addressed by the Mayor of Bogawindi who engaged us to prepare a sustainable tourism plan for his fictitious municipality.

Social significance and community consultation

One of the more neglected components of heritage significance is social value. Chris Johnston spoke to the school about how to consult community groups and determine the significance of a group or community's current attachment to a place. Social significance is often overlooked when places are assessed. This reflects the many issues surrounding the assessment of social significance such as perceived subjectivity, a resource intensive identification process and difficulties in classifying and protecting intangible values.

Site Visits

While the theoretical components of the Summer School provided us with an understanding of heritage conservation principles and processes, what is often practicably achievable was illustrated through various site inspections. Each of these site visits enabled us to develop a better understanding not only of what constitutes 'best practice' heritage management but also the issues that may prevent their application.



London Bridge Homestead

This place is significant as it demonstrates five types of building construction, reflecting changes in the availability and costs of labour and materials. It also reflects the isolation and hardship faced by early settlers in the region. The homestead, an hour's drive from Canberra, is only accessible via a walking track and is managed by the ACT Parks Service. We were split into small groups and made short presentations on how we thought the homestead should be managed.



Lanyon

A homestead and remnant of a large pastoral property, Lanyon has architectural and historical significance. Located in the 'Lanyon bowl', the vista from the homestead is protected by a planning overlay. The homestead and outbuildings date from the mid-nineteenth century to the present and subtle interpretive mechanisms, such as different paint schemes, have been used to distinguish buildings from different eras. Lanyon is run as a house museum and function venue by ACT Historic Places, part of the ACT government.



Mugga Mugga

Another remnant of a large pastoral property, Mugga Mugga is a complex of modest buildings in a variety of styles and materials, similar to London Bridge Homestead. The site was particularly interesting from a management perspective as it is not occupied and in its current condition too fragile to host unaccompanied visits.

Old Parliament House

Ree Kent, a heritage conservation expert currently employed at Old Parliament House, spoke about the preparation of conservation management plans. Management policy and procedure for this complex heritage site were explained in the context of how conservation philosophy and heritage tourism expectations had evolved over time. Our tour guide, Bob Hawke, took us on the standard tour of Old Parliament House and Ree took us behind the scenes to see some more recent refurbishment and conservation works.

Conclusion

The school was particularly valuable in providing an opportunity to network and share ideas with other heritage professionals. Many participants made presentations to the class, describing their various achievements and challenges. Examples of these issues included the appropriate siting of a proposed visitor interpretation centre at Woolmers Estate in Tasmania, and disposal of redundant defence sites across Australia. Professional contacts made over the duration of the summer school position us, as employees of Heritage Victoria, for successful collaborative approaches to heritage-related issues, especially between state and Commonwealth heritage agencies.

The Summer School gave a comprehensive overview of cultural heritage management which, along with the accompanying written material, will be an invaluable reference tool in our future professions.