

Peter Clifton James A.M., LL.B. (Hons.), M. ICOMOS

(17 August 1942 – 31 March 2015)

Australia ICOMOS sadly records the death of Peter James, former Chairman of the Tasmanian Heritage Council, former Executive Director of the National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) and very active member and supporter of Australia ICOMOS since its formation in 1976.

Peter was born at the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Battery Point, Hobart, Tasmania on 17 August 1942. His parents, Stanley Youngforde James and Joan McGough (née Allanby), both worked for the Bank of New South Wales in Hobart and had married in October 1941. Stanley James, the son of a Free Baptist minister from Glamorgan in South Wales, emigrated to South Africa in 1931, before moving to Sydney and then eventually onto Tasmania. Peter's father spent most of the war years with the Bank of New South Wales in Fiji. For his first ten years, Peter lived at his maternal grandmother's family home, Glenalla, in Ryde Street, North Hobart. The gabled two-storey house, which was later demolished for expansion of the Hobart High School, was just a stone's throw from the Letitia Street terminus of the tram line which served Liverpool Street and West Hobart.

In 1948, at the age of 5, Peter was enrolled at the nearby Friends' School, a large co-educational Quaker institution which his mother had also attended; here he completed his primary and secondary schooling. In 1952, when Peter was in grade 5, the family moved to a flat in Lenna, the grand 1870s mansion built by shipowner and merchant, Alexander McGregor overlooking Princes Park in Battery Point. For the next seven years Peter travelled by tram to school in North Hobart. Peter claimed that he didn't enjoy school all that much, but he did well academically, and his connections with Friends' were to assist his subsequent career. He was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to study law at the University of Tasmania, initially in the old Queen's Domain buildings, and subsequently at the new Sandy Bay campus.

Peter's first year at university (1960) was also the last year of Hobart's trams. In October that year, a week before the demise of the tram service, Peter and three other young members of the Australian Electric Traction Association persuaded the Metropolitan Transport Trust to donate one of the last trams (No. 141) for preservation. The tram was initially stored at Hobart's railway roundhouse, before taking its place at the Tasmanian Transport Museum in 1979. Peter spent hours undertaking archival research, where he came into contact with Geoffrey Stilwell and John Morris (another former Friends' student) who were both active members of the newly-formed Tasmanian branch of the National Trust. He was 'conned into joining' the National Trust, and also joined the Tasmanian Historical Research Association (THRA). In 1961, Peter presented a paper on the Emu Bay and Mount Bischoff Railway, followed by another paper in 1965 on the North East Dundas Railway – a narrow gauge line between Zeehan and Williamsford on Tasmania's West Coast. Peter's early interest in trams and railways was his introduction to the world of historical research and heritage conservation. His passion for railway history remained with him forever and a model railway adorned his home. During the early 1960s Peter also undertook a systematic photographic survey of every building in central Hobart, realising how much had already been lost during the previous decade.

Upon graduation, Peter worked with Hobart law firm, Murdoch, Clarke, Neasey and Cosgrove, and in 1966 was appointed Associate to Sir Victor Windeyer, Justice of the High Court of Australia. He also assisted Sir Garfield Barwick for a brief period. His work with Justice Windeyer encouraged Peter to investigate case law from other jurisdictions, notably the United States of America, rather than adopting the traditional reliance on English precedents. Now living in Sydney, Peter renewed his friendship with John Morris who had also moved from Tasmania. At one stage John and Peter shared a flat. Peter worked with Dudley Westgarth and Partners, and provided legal advice to the National Trust on various minor issues. In the early 1970s he travelled overseas, which included a year in Bali and time in Singapore and the Philippines. Peter enjoyed travelling, especially exploring the many pockets of colonial settlement throughout South East Asia.

The mid 1970s was a critical period in heritage conservation in Australia. The concept of the 'National Estate' had been developed during the Whitlam years; the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) met for the first time in 1976; the same year saw the establishment of Australia ICOMOS.

John Morris, who by this time was Director of the National Trust of Australia (New South Wales), had been actively involved in the fight to save Potts Point and Woolloomooloo. In the early 1970s, John had worked 'behind the scenes' with Jack Munday of the Builder's Labourers Federation to ensure the preservation of great swathes of inner Sydney. John offered Peter the position as Deputy Director of the National Trust – as Peter put it, 'following in the footsteps' of Jim Kerr who had been Assistant Director – a position Peter retained until 1983.

During this period, the development and transformation of the National Trust continued, with better organisation of advisory committees and greater reliance on professional conservation advice. The Trust appointed to its honorary committees key academics and practitioners – Judy Birmingham, James Broadbent, Clive Lucas, Max Kelly, Don Godden and many others. Peter gathered together at the Trust's headquarters at Observatory Hill an enthusiastic and energetic staff that included many young graduates who were later to carve their own distinguished careers, including Richard Mackay, Grace Karskens, Siobhan Lavelle and Martin Davies. During his time at the Trust, Peter fostered a supportive environment for professional ideas and research. Peter took a particular interest in the work of the Industrial Archaeology Committee, and anything to do with railways!

Buoyed by the success of its indirect collaboration with the 'Green Bans' and with new confidence, the Trust continued its conservation battles. Peter fought to save Pyrmont Bridge, which was threatened as part of the New South Wales Government's Darling Harbour project. Less successful were his efforts to preserve the nearby railway sheds at Darling Harbour. The National Trust challenged major developments including Cumberland Stadium in Parramatta Park, the Intercontinental Hotel in the former Treasury Building, the finger wharf at Woolloomooloo Bay, the Queen Victoria Building, Regent Theatre, Capitol Theatre and the demolition of the Art Deco State Bank (formerly Rural Bank) Building in Martin Place. The latter campaign included badges, bumper stickers and full-page advertisements announcing "The State Bank demolishes more for you personally" – a parody of the Bank's marketing slogan.

David Yencken, the first chairman of the Australian Heritage Commission engaged Peter to prepare a report on heritage legislation, examining what was needed at state level to complement the new Commonwealth legislation. Peter's work, *A report on legislation to protect the National Estate in Australia*, was published by the Commonwealth in 1979.

Peter was involved with the initial drafting of the New South Wales legislation (*Heritage Act 1977*) and when the Heritage Council of New South Wales was established in 1978, Peter served as an alternate nominee of the National Trust.

A member of Australia ICOMOS since its establishment, Peter served on the original committee that drafted the *Burra Charter*, provisionally adopted in August 1979. Peter was instrumental in getting the National Trust to publish the *Burra Charter* following its revision and formal endorsement by Australia ICOMOS in 1981 – a pocket-size (DL format) booklet which could be carried (and posted) easily. Peter also ensured that Jim Kerr's seminal work *The Conservation Plan* was published by the National Trust in 1982. The January edition was soon followed by a second impression in April, and many subsequent editions. Peter's involvement in the publication and dissemination of these two key documents brought profound benefits to heritage conservation in Australia and internationally.

In 1983, at the age of 41, Peter was appointed Executive Director of the National Trust. The Trust continued acquisition of significant properties throughout regional New South Wales, including Dundullimal at Dubbo and Saumarez, Armidale. In 1984 the Trust purchased Juniper Hall in Paddington, effectively rescuing the property from redevelopment. Juniper Hall became the focal project of the National Trust's Bicentennial program. In April 1986 Premier Neville Wran launched the National Trust Fund at Old Government House, seeking corporate sponsorship of \$50,000 from 20 companies, and foreshadowing a \$5 million public appeal to fund conservation projects. The vision was partly successful, with Peter enlisting the financial support of large corporations such as Amatil and Caltex. But in 1989, after the excitement and gloss of the Bicentenary had worn off, the harsh reality set in – especially for the Trust. The organisation was in substantial debt. Peter's plan to offer the Trust's Darling Point property, Lindesay, for private leasehold in order to provide a substantial income stream, generated a community outcry and subsequent legal action. Following rejection of the plan by the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Peter tendered his resignation as Director of the Trust in June 1989. Further hardship followed for the Trust when the government appointed an administrator and it was forced to shed many staff.

During the middle of the Trust's problems with the Women's Committee and the Friends of Lindesay Action Group in 1989, Peter suffered a personal embarrassment when he was taken to court by the Woollahra Council, for unauthorised building work associated with a deck on his roof-top Oxford Street apartment.

With Helen Halliday and Tim McDonald, Peter established HJM Consultants Pty Ltd (later HJM Environmental Strategies) in Canberra, specialising in heritage assessment, legislative policy, cultural tourism and related fields. Peter worked with Helen Halliday and Joan Domicelj on a major report for the Commonwealth Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories entitled *Australia's cultural estate: framework for the assessment of Australia's cultural properties against the World Heritage criteria*, published in 1992.

In addition to his work on World Heritage assessment, Peter was also involved in the preparation and review of heritage legislation in all Australian states and territories, advising or serving on many ministerial working groups. He was the first to introduce the concept of 'Heritage Agreements' – initially in the South Australian legislation, but now widespread in other jurisdictions. His 1979 report for the Heritage Commission was republished by HJM as *A guide to the legal protection of the National Estate in Australia as at 31 December 1994*.

Peter was made a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours on 11 June 2001, *for service to heritage conservation, particularly in the drafting and development of Australian heritage legislation and through the provision of advice to government concerning heritage and conservation practice*.

His work on the Tasmanian legislation, which evolved during the course of an eventful period in Tasmanian politics and several changes of government, eventually resulted in the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995* – achieved with support of the three political parties. Peter was appointed chairman of the newly established Tasmanian Heritage Council in 1997 and retained the position until November 2005. The THC offices at 134 Macquarie Street were conveniently close to the Tasmanian Club, the 1846 former Derwent Bank building, where Peter would frequently conduct business with his guests.

During this period in Hobart, Peter maintained his consultancy work with JNP Pawsey Prowse in Cairns, travelling between Cairns and Hobart each month. Prior to the establishment of the Tasmanian Heritage Council, Peter served as chairman of the Southern Regional Committee of the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), and was also a state councillor. Peter continued the supportive association with the National Trust, holding the monthly meetings of the Heritage Council at the Trust's New Town property, Runnymede – a home which shares interesting whaling links with Peter's childhood home, Lenna.

As chairman of the new Tasmanian Heritage Council and author of its founding legislation, Peter effectively grappled with the problem of quickly protecting the cultural values of a state with the highest number of significant places per capita, but with inadequate resources. The Tasmanian Heritage Register was compiled with minimal fuss, and little community opposition. A summary of this process is reported in *Australia ICOMOS Newsletter*, Volume 18, No. 3, August 1998, pp. 4-6.

A major initiative of the Tasmanian Heritage Council during Peter's time was the establishment of a Cultural Landscapes Committee and a Cultural Landscapes Advisory Panel. Though well established in Europe and North America, the concept of 'cultural landscapes' had received little attention in Australia. Peter persuaded Premier Jim Bacon to facilitate a visit to Tasmania by the historical ecologist and leading authority on cultural landscapes, Dr Oliver Rackham of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Peter advised the Tasmanian government in relation to protection of cultural values in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and he was responsible for the initial concept of a serial site nomination of Australia's convict sites for World Heritage listing.

Peter welcomed the opportunity of sharing his experience and expertise, lecturing in heritage law at the University of Tasmania and tropical heritage law at James Cook University in Queensland. He also addressed many conferences and was a guest lecturer at universities throughout Australia and overseas. He maintained a strong professional interest in the work of Australia ICOMOS, though he considered that the various amendments to the *Burra Charter* had not necessarily enhanced the clarity and conciseness of the original document.

In Cairns, Peter's work included assessment of cultural values within the Cape York Peninsula and the Great Barrier Reef. Peter provided heritage advice, primarily in relation to legislation, tourism or World Heritage issues in New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Tonga. Peter had strong involvement with the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA), especially in Hong Kong and Macau. He served as a member of the PATA Advisory Council (1988-1993) and wrote the PATA *Handbook on Inventories* – a publication designed to assist countries in Asia and the Pacific which do not have any register of their cultural assets. Peter conducted courses on cultural tourism for PATA in both Macau and Hawaii. Peter retraced his father's footsteps to some extent, when he travelled to Fiji to advise on the World Heritage nomination of Levuka, the early colonial capital, established around 1820. Peter's passion for the exotic was exemplified in his home in Australia's far north with its stunning garden of tropical flowers.

Peter was a man of great energy and drive. He had a keen wit and great sense of humour. He enjoyed recounting humorous anecdotes and was a great mimic. Peter used his generosity and charm to bring out the best in people. In many ways, he was 'ahead of his time' – he fought to save Tasmania's Abt railway when it closed in 1963. The line eventually reopened in 2003 (now the West Coast Wilderness Railway). He championed the connection between tourism and heritage long before the concept of cultural tourism achieved general recognition. Interestingly, his mother had won a school prize in 1929 for an essay on the subject of 'Tasmania and Tourists'. Peter's involvement with the protection of heritage in South East Asia came long before general Australian engagement with its regional neighbours.

Peter's health suffered in recent years, and rapidly declined in 2015. He spent his last fortnight in care at Guilford Young Grove, Sandy Bay, where he died peacefully in the early hours of Tuesday 31 March 2015. Peter was interviewed by Dr Bronwyn Hanna for the National Library of Australia in September 2013, when his recollections were still quite sharp. The interview – lasting nearly three and a half hours – is available at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn6416800>.

Peter is survived by his sister, Jennifer Mora and her family. A Requiem Mass was offered in Peter's memory at All Saints' Anglican Church, South Hobart on Friday 17 April 2015 – a service attended by many friends and former colleagues from both New South Wales and Tasmania. As with so many churches and other places throughout his life, Peter had assisted the conservation of All Saints' and the 1859 Henry Hunter building provided a fitting venue for Peter's final farewell. The date (17 April) coincidentally marked the anniversary of the death in 1933 of Clifton Allanby, the maternal grandfather from whom Peter's middle name was derived.

Brendan Lennard
Hobart
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