**Preamble**

Considering the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice 1964), and the Resolutions of the 5th General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (Moscow 1978), the Burra Charter was adopted by Australia ICOMOS (the Australian National Committee of ICOMOS) on 19 August 1979 at Burra, South Australia. Revisions were adopted on 23 February 1981, 23 April 1988 and 26 November 1999.

The Burra Charter provides guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance (cultural heritage places), and is based on the knowledge and experience of Australia ICOMOS members.

Conservation is an integral part of the management of places of cultural significance and is an ongoing responsibility.

**Who is the Charter for?**

The Charter sets a standard of practice for those who provide advice, make decisions about, or undertake works to places of cultural significance, including owners, managers and custodians.

**Using the Charter**

The Charter should be read as a whole. Many articles are interdependent. Articles in the Conservation Principles section are often further developed in the Conservation Processes and Conservation Practice sections. Headings have been included for ease of reading but do not form part of the Charter.

The Charter is self-contained, but aspects of its use and application are further explained in the following Australia ICOMOS documents:

- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance;
- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy;
- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports;

**What places does the Charter apply to?**

The Charter can be applied to all types of places of cultural significance including natural, indigenous and historic places with cultural values.

The standards of other organisations may also be relevant. These include the Australian Natural Heritage Charter and the Draft Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places.

**Why conserve?**

Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. They are historical records, that are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience. Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious.

These places of cultural significance must be conserved for present and future generations.

The Burra Charter advocates a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.
Articles

Article 1. Definitions

For the purposes of this Charter:

1.1 Place means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views.

1.2 Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects.

Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

1.3 Fabric means all the physical material of the place including components, fixtures, contents, and objects.

1.4 Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.

1.5 Maintenance means the continuous protective care of the fabric and setting of a place, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves restoration or reconstruction.

1.6 Preservation means maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

1.7 Restoration means returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

1.8 Reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material into the fabric.

1.9 Adaptation means modifying a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use.

1.10 Use means the functions of a place, as well as the activities and practices that may occur at the place.

1.11 Compatible use means a use which respects the cultural significance of a place. Such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on cultural significance.

1.12 Setting means the area around a place, which may include the visual catchment.

1.13 Related place means a place that contributes to the cultural significance of another place.

Explanatory Notes

The concept of place should be broadly interpreted. The elements described in Article 1.1 may include memorials, trees, gardens, parks, places of historical events, urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places.

The term cultural significance is synonymous with heritage significance and cultural heritage value.

Cultural significance may change as a result of the continuing history of the place.

Understanding of cultural significance may change as a result of new information.

Fabric includes building interiors and subsurface remains, as well as excavated material.

Fabric may define spaces and these may be important elements of the significance of the place.

The distinctions referred to, for example in relation to roof gutters, are:
- maintenance — regular inspection and cleaning of gutters;
- repair involving restoration — returning of dislodged gutters;
- repair involving reconstruction — replacing decayed gutters.

It is recognised that all places and their components change over time at varying rates.

New material may include recycled material salvaged from other places. This should not be to the detriment of any place of cultural significance.
Articles

1.14 Related object means an object that contributes to the cultural significance of a place but is not at the place.

1.15 Associations mean the special connections that exist between people and a place.

1.16 Meanings denote what a place signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses.

1.17 Interpretation means all the ways of presenting the cultural significance of a place.

Conservation Principles

Article 2. Conservation and management

2.1 Places of cultural significance should be conserved.

2.2 The aim of conservation is to retain the cultural significance of a place.

2.3 Conservation is an integral part of good management of places of cultural significance.

2.4 Places of cultural significance should be safeguarded and not put at risk or left in a vulnerable state.

Article 3. Cautious approach

3.1 Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.

3.2 Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.

Article 4. Knowledge, skills and techniques

4.1 Conservation should make use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of the place.

4.2 Traditional techniques and materials are preferred for the conservation of significant fabric. In some circumstances modern techniques and materials which offer substantial conservation benefits may be appropriate.

Explanatory Notes

Associations may include social or spiritual values and cultural responsibilities for a place.

Meanings generally relate to intangible aspects such as symbolic qualities and memories.

Interpretation may be a combination of the treatment of the fabric (e.g. maintenance, restoration, reconstruction); the use of and activities at the place; and the use of introduced explanatory material.

The traces of additions, alterations and earlier treatments to the fabric of a place are evidence of its history and uses which may be part of its significance. Conservation action should assist and not impede their understanding.

The use of modern materials and techniques must be supported by firm scientific evidence or by a body of experience.
Articles

Article 5. Values

5.1 **Conservation** of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.

5.2 Relative degrees of **cultural significance** may lead to different **conservation** actions at a place.

Article 6. Burra Charter process

6.1 The **cultural significance** of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy.

6.2 The policy for managing a place must be **based** on an understanding of its **cultural significance**.

6.3 Policy development should also include consideration of other factors affecting the future of a place such as the owner’s needs, resources, external constraints and its physical condition.

Article 7. Use

7.1 Where the **use** of a place is of **cultural significance** it should be retained.

7.2 A place should have a **compatible use**.

Article 8. Setting

**Conservation** requires the retention of an appropriate visual **setting** and other relationships that contribute to the **cultural significance** of the place.

New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.

Explanatory Notes

Conservation of places with natural significance is explained in the Australian Natural Heritage Charter. This Charter defines natural significance to mean the importance of ecosystems, biological diversity and geodiversity for their existence value, or for present or future generations in terms of their scientific, social, aesthetic and life-support value.

A cautious approach is needed, as understanding of cultural significance may change. This article should not be used to justify actions which do not retain cultural significance.

The Burra Charter process, or sequence of investigations, decisions and actions, is illustrated in the accompanying flowchart.

The policy should identify a use or combination of uses or constraints on uses that retain the cultural significance of the place. New use of a place should involve minimal change, to significant fabric and use; should respect associations and meanings; and where appropriate should provide for continuation of practices which contribute to the cultural significance of the place.

Aspects of the visual setting may include use, siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and materials.

Other relationships, such as historical connections, may contribute to interpretation, appreciation, enjoyment or experience of the place.


**Articles**

**Article 9. Location**

9.1 The physical location of a place is part of its cultural significance. A building, work or other component of a place should remain in its historical location. Relocation is generally unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival.

9.2 Some buildings, works or other components of places were designed to be readily removable or already have a history of relocation. Provided such buildings, works or other components do not have significant links with their present location, removal may be appropriate.

9.3 If any building, work or other component is moved, it should be moved to an appropriate location and given an appropriate use. Such action should not be to the detriment of any place of cultural significance.

**Article 10. Contents**

Contents, fixtures and objects which contribute to the cultural significance of a place should be retained at that place. Their removal is unacceptable unless it is: the sole means of ensuring their security and preservation; on a temporary basis for treatment or exhibition; for cultural reasons; for health and safety; or to protect the place. Such contents, fixtures and objects should be returned where circumstances permit and it is culturally appropriate.

**Article 11. Related places and objects**

The contribution which related places and related objects make to the cultural significance of the place should be retained.

**Article 12. Participation**

Conservation, interpretation and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has special associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place.

**Article 13. Co-existence of cultural values**

Co-existence of cultural values should be recognised, respected and encouraged, especially in cases where they conflict.

**Explanatory Notes**

For some places, conflicting cultural values may affect policy development and management decisions. In this article, the term cultural values refers to those beliefs which are important to a cultural group, including but not limited to political, religious, spiritual and moral beliefs. This is broader than values associated with cultural significance.
Conservation Processes

Article 14. Conservation processes

Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a use; retention of associations and meanings; maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

Article 15. Change

15.1 Change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a place should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation.

15.2 Changes which reduce cultural significance should be reversible, and be reversed when circumstances permit.

15.3 Demolition of significant fabric of a place is generally not acceptable. However, in some cases minor demolition may be appropriate as part of conservation. Removed significant fabric should be reinstated when circumstances permit.

15.4 The contributions of all aspects of cultural significance of a place should be respected. If a place includes fabric, use, associations or meanings of different periods, or different aspects of cultural significance, emphasising or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasised or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.

Article 16. Maintenance

Maintenance is fundamental to conservation and should be undertaken where fabric is of cultural significance and its maintenance is necessary to retain that cultural significance.

Explanatory Notes

There may be circumstances where no action is required to achieve conservation.

When change is being considered, a range of options should be explored to seek the option which minimises the reduction of cultural significance.

Reversible changes should be considered temporary. Non-reversible change should only be used as a last resort and should not prevent future conservation action.
**Articles**

**Article 17. Preservation**

_Preservation_ is appropriate where the existing _fabric_ or its condition constitutes evidence of _cultural significance_, or where insufficient evidence is available to allow other _conservation_ processes to be carried out.

**Article 18. Restoration and reconstruction**

_Restoration and reconstruction_ should reveal culturally significant aspects of the _place_.

**Article 19. Restoration**

_Restoration_ is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the _fabric_.

**Article 20. Reconstruction**

20.1 _Reconstruction_ is appropriate only where a _place_ is incomplete through damage or alteration, and only where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the _fabric_. In rare cases, reconstruction may also be appropriate as part of a use or practice that retains the _cultural significance_ of the place.

20.2 _Reconstruction_ should be identifiable on close inspection or through additional _interpretation_.

**Article 21. Adaptation**

21.1 _Adaptation_ is acceptable only where the adaptation has minimal impact on the _cultural significance_ of the _place_.

21.2 _Adaptation_ should involve minimal change to significant _fabric_, achieved only after considering alternatives.

**Article 22. New work**

22.1 New work such as additions to the _place_ may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the _cultural significance_ of the _place_, or detract from its _interpretation_ and appreciation.

22.2 New work should be readily identifiable as such.

**Explanatory Notes**

Preservation protects fabric without obscuring the evidence of its construction and use. The process should always be applied:

- where the evidence of the fabric is of such significance that it should not be altered;
- where insufficient investigation has been carried out to permit policy decisions to be taken in accord with Articles 26 to 28.

New work (e.g. stabilization) may be carried out in association with preservation when its purpose is the physical protection of the fabric and when it is consistent with Article 22.

Adaptation may involve the introduction of new services, or a new use, or changes to safeguard the place.

New work may be sympathetic if its siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material are similar to the existing fabric, but imitation should be avoided.
Articles

Article 23. Conserving use
Continuing, modifying or reinstating a significant use may be appropriate and preferred forms of conservation.

Article 24. Retaining associations and meanings
24.1 Significant associations between people and a place should be respected, retained and not obscured. Opportunities for the interpretation, commemoration and celebration of these associations should be investigated and implemented.

24.2 Significant meanings, including spiritual values, of a place should be respected. Opportunities for the continuation or revival of these meanings should be investigated and implemented.

Article 25. Interpretation
The cultural significance of many places is not readily apparent, and should be explained by interpretation. Interpretation should enhance understanding and enjoyment, and be culturally appropriate.

Conservation Practice

Article 26. Applying the Burra Charter process
26.1 Work on a place should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.

26.2 Written statements of cultural significance and policy for the place should be prepared, justified and accompanied by supporting evidence. The statements of significance and policy should be incorporated into a management plan for the place.

26.3 Groups and individuals with associations with a place as well as those involved in its management should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in understanding the cultural significance of the place. Where appropriate they should also have opportunities to participate in its conservation and management.

Article 27. Managing change
27.1 The impact of proposed changes on the cultural significance of a place should be analysed with reference to the statement of significance and the policy for managing the place. It may be necessary to modify proposed changes following analysis to better retain cultural significance.

27.2 Existing fabric, use, associations and meanings should be adequately recorded before any changes are made to the place.

Explanatory Notes

These may require changes to significant fabric but they should be minimised. In some cases, continuing a significant use or practice may involve substantial new work.

For many places associations will be linked to use.

The results of studies should be up to date, regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.

Statements of significance and policy should be kept up to date by regular review and revision as necessary. The management plan may deal with other matters related to the management of the place.
Article 28. Disturbance of fabric

28.1 Disturbance of significant fabric for study, or to obtain evidence, should be minimised. Study of a place by any disturbance of the fabric, including archaeological excavation, should only be undertaken to provide data essential for decisions on the conservation of the place, or to obtain important evidence about to be lost or made inaccessible.

28.2 Investigation of a place which requires disturbance of the fabric, apart from that necessary to make decisions, may be appropriate provided that it is consistent with the policy for the place. Such investigation should be based on important research questions which have potential to substantially add to knowledge, which cannot be answered in other ways and which minimises disturbance of significant fabric.

Article 29. Responsibility for decisions

The organisations and individuals responsible for management decisions should be named and specific responsibility taken for each such decision.

Article 30. Direction, supervision and implementation

Competent direction and supervision should be maintained at all stages, and any changes should be implemented by people with appropriate knowledge and skills.

Article 31. Documenting evidence and decisions

A log of new evidence and additional decisions should be kept.

Article 32. Records

32.1 The records associated with the conservation of a place should be placed in a permanent archive and made publicly available, subject to requirements of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.

32.2 Records about the history of a place should be protected and made publicly available, subject to requirements of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.

Article 33. Removed fabric

Significant fabric which has been removed from a place including contents, fixtures and objects, should be catalogued, and protected in accordance with its cultural significance.

Where possible and culturally appropriate, removed significant fabric including contents, fixtures and objects, should be kept at the place.

Article 34. Resources

Adequate resources should be provided for conservation.

Words in italics are defined in Article 1.
The Burra Charter Process
Sequence of investigations, decisions and actions

1. **Identify Place and Associations**
   - Secure the place and make it safe

2. **Gather and Record Information About the Place**
   - Sufficient to understand significance
   - Documentary
   - Oral
   - Physical

3. **Assess Significance**

4. **Prepare a Statement of Significance**

5. **Identify Obligations Arising From Significance**

6. **Gather Information About Other Factors**
   - Affecting the future of the place
   - Owner/manager’s needs and resources
   - External factors
   - Physical condition

7. **Develop Policy**
   - Identify options
   - Consider options and test their impact on significance

8. **Prepare a Statement of Policy**

9. **Manage Place in Accordance With Policy**
   - Develop strategies
   - Implement strategies through a management plan
   - Record place prior to any change

10. **Monitor and Review**

The whole process is iterative. Parts of it may need to be repeated. Further research and consultation may be necessary.