THE BURRA CHARTER

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013

Australia ICOMOS Incorporated
International Council on Monuments and Sites
ICOMOS

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental professional organisation formed in 1965, with headquarters in Paris. ICOMOS is primarily concerned with the philosophy, terminology, methodology and techniques of cultural heritage conservation. It is closely linked to UNESCO, particularly in its role under the World Heritage Convention 1972 as UNESCO’s principal adviser on cultural matters related to World Heritage. The 11,000 members of ICOMOS include architects, town planners, demographers, archaeologists, geographers, historians, conservators, anthropologists, scientists, engineers and heritage administrators. Members in the 103 countries belonging to ICOMOS are formed into National Committees and participate in a range of conservation projects, research work, intercultural exchanges and cooperative activities. ICOMOS also has 27 International Scientific Committees that focus on particular aspects of the conservation field. ICOMOS members meet triennially in a General Assembly.

Australia ICOMOS

The Australian National Committee of ICOMOS (Australia ICOMOS) was formed in 1976. It elects an Executive Committee of 15 members, which is responsible for carrying out national programs and participating in decisions of ICOMOS as an international organisation. It provides expert advice as required by ICOMOS, especially in its relationship with the World Heritage Committee. Australia ICOMOS acts as a national and international link between public authorities, institutions and individuals involved in the study and conservation of all places of cultural significance. Australia ICOMOS members participate in a range of conservation activities including site visits, training, conferences and meetings.

Revision of the Burra Charter

The Burra Charter was first adopted in 1979 at the historic South Australian mining town of Burra. Minor revisions were made in 1981 and 1988, with more substantial changes in 1999.

Following a review this version was adopted by Australia ICOMOS in October 2013.

The review process included replacement of the 1988 Guidelines to the Burra Charter with Practice Notes which are available at: australia.icomos.org

Australia ICOMOS documents are periodically reviewed and we welcome any comments.

Citing the Burra Charter

The full reference is *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013*. Initial textual references should be in the form of the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* and later references in the short form (*Burra Charter*).

© Australia ICOMOS Incorporated 2013

The Burra Charter consists of the Preamble, Articles, Explanatory Notes and the flow chart.

This publication may be reproduced, but only in its entirety including the front cover and this page. Formatting must remain unaltered. Parts of the Burra Charter may be quoted with appropriate citing and acknowledgement.

Cover photograph by Ian Stapleton.

Australia ICOMOS Incorporated [ABN 155 731 025]
Secretariat: c/o Faculty of Arts
Deakin University
Burwood, VIC 3125
Australia

http://australia.icomos.org/

ISBN 0 9578528 4 3
The Burra Charter
(The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013)

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, 26 November 1999 and 31 October 2013.

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.

The Charter consists of:

- Definitions Article 1
- Conservation Principles Articles 2–13
- Conservation Processes Articles 14–25
- Conservation Practices Articles 26–34
- The Burra Charter Process flow chart.

The key concepts are included in the Conservation Principles section and these are further developed in the Conservation Processes and Conservation Practice sections. The flow chart explains the Burra Charter Process (Article 6) and is an integral part of the Charter. Explanatory Notes also form part of the Charter.

The Charter is self-contained, but aspects of its use and application are further explained, in a series of Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, in The Illustrated Burra Charter, and in other guiding documents available from the Australia ICOMOS web site: australia.icomos.org.

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, Ask First: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values and Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections.

National and international charters and other doctrine may be relevant. See australia.icomos.org.

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 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 in accordance with the principle of inter-generational equity.

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 a geographically defined area. It may include elements, objects, spaces and views. Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions.

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 elements, 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 a place, and its setting.

   Maintenance is to be distinguished from repair which involves restoration or reconstruction.

1.6 *Preservation* means maintaining a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

1.7 *Restoration* means returning a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing elements 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.

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

1.10 *Use* means the functions of a place, including the activities and traditional and customary practices that may occur at the place or are dependent on the place.

**Explanatory Notes**

Place has a broad scope and includes natural and cultural features. Place can be large or small: for example, a memorial, a tree, an individual building or group of buildings, the location of an historical event, an urban area or town, a cultural landscape, a garden, an industrial plant, a shipwreck, a site with in situ remains, a stone arrangement, a road or travel route, a community meeting place, a site with spiritual or religious connections.

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

Cultural significance may change over time and with use.

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

Fabric includes building interiors and subsurface remains, as well as excavated material. Natural elements of a place may also constitute fabric. For example the rocks that signify a Dreaming place.

Fabric may define spaces and views and these may be part of the significance of the place.

See also Article 14.

Examples of protective care include:

- **maintenance** — regular inspection and cleaning of a place, e.g. mowing and pruning in a garden;
- **repair involving restoration** — returning dislodged or relocated fabric to its original location e.g. loose roof gutters on a building or displaced rocks in a stone bora ring;
- **repair involving reconstruction** — replacing decayed fabric with new fabric

It is recognised that all places and their elements 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.

Use includes for example cultural practices commonly associated with Indigenous peoples such as ceremonies, hunting and fishing, and fulfillment of traditional obligations. Exercising a right of access may be a use.
Articles

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 immediate and extended environment of a place that is part of or contributes to its cultural significance and distinctive character.

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

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 connections that exist between people and a place.

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

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.

Explanatory Notes

Setting may include: structures, spaces, land, water and sky; the visual setting including views to and from the place, and along a cultural route; and other sensory aspects of the setting such as smells and sounds. Setting may also include historical and contemporary relationships, such as use and activities, social and spiritual practices, and relationships with other places, both tangible and intangible.

Objects at a place are encompassed by the definition of place, and may or may not contribute to its cultural significance.

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

Meanings generally relate to intangible dimensions 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.
Articles

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.

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. This is the Burra Charter Process.

6.2 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.

6.4 In developing an effective policy, different ways to retain cultural significance and address other factors may need to be explored.

6.5 Changes in circumstances, or new information or perspectives, may require reiteration of part or all of the Burra Charter Process.

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.
**Articles**

**Article 8. Setting**

Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate setting. This includes retention of the visual and sensory setting, as well as the retention of spiritual and other cultural 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.

**Article 9. Location**

9.1 The physical location of a place is part of its cultural significance. A building, work or other element 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 elements of places were designed to be readily removable or already have a history of relocation. Provided such buildings, works or other elements do not have significant links with their present location, removal may be appropriate.

9.3 If any building, work or other element 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 significant 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 always be recognised, respected and encouraged. This is especially important in cases where they conflict.

---

*The Burra Charter, 2013*
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. Conservation may also include retention of the contribution that related places and related objects make to the cultural significance of a place.

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 and its use 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, uses, 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. Maintenance should be undertaken where fabric is of cultural significance and its maintenance is necessary to retain that cultural significance.

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.

6 — Australia ICOMOS Incorporated
Articles

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 some 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 or other changes to the place may be acceptable where it respects and 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, but must respect and have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place.

Article 23. Retaining or reintroducing use

Retaining, modifying or reintroducing 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.
**Articles**

**Article 25. Interpretation**

The cultural significance of many places is not readily apparent, and should be explained by interpretation. Interpretation should enhance understanding and engagement, 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 the place as well as those involved in its management should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in identifying and understanding the cultural significance of the place. Where appropriate they should also have opportunities to participate in its conservation and management.

26.4 Statements of cultural significance and policy for the place should be periodically reviewed, and actions and their consequences monitored to ensure continuing appropriateness and effectiveness.

**Article 27. Managing change**

27.1 The impact of proposed changes, including incremental changes, on the cultural significance of a place should be assessed with reference to the statement of significance and the policy for managing the place. It may be necessary to modify proposed changes to better retain cultural significance.

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

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

The organisations and individuals responsible for management and decisions should be named and specific responsibility taken for each 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. Keeping a log

New evidence may come to light while implementing policy or a plan for a place. Other factors may arise and require new 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

Steps in planning for and managing a place of cultural significance

The Burra Charter should be read as a whole.

Key articles relevant to each step are shown in the boxes. Article 6 summarises the Burra Charter Process.

1. UNDERSTAND THE PLACE
   - Define the place and its extent
   - Investigate the place: its history, use, associations, fabric
   - Articles 5–7, 12, 26

2. ASSESS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE
   - Assess all values using relevant criteria
   - Develop a statement of significance
   - Article 26

3. IDENTIFY ALL FACTORS AND ISSUES
   - Identify obligations arising from significance
   - Identify future needs, resources, opportunities and constraints, and condition
   - Articles 6, 12

4. DEVELOP POLICY
   - Articles 6–13, 26

5. PREPARE A MANAGEMENT PLAN
   - Define priorities, resources, responsibilities and timing
   - Develop implementation actions
   - Articles 14–28

6. IMPLEMENT THE MANAGEMENT PLAN
   - Articles 26–34

7. MONITOR THE RESULTS & REVIEW THE PLAN
   - Article 26