EDITORIAL

This edition of Historic Environment publishes a selection of the papers presented at the Australia ICOMOS Managing A Shared Heritage conference, held in Darwin in December 1993.

The conference was designed ‘to confront the opportunities and challenges of conserving the multicultural heritage of Australia and the near Asian regions, and to define issues and exchange experience in the conservation of materials and sites which are the heritage of more than one community group.’

Darwin, a notably multi-cultural community which has long had close ties with Asia, was clearly the logical venue for the discussion of cross-cultural heritage conservation issues. It is the capital of a region where cultural heritage has more often than not been the contribution of special groups, from the Dreamtime through Indonesian seafarers to European settlers and Chinese miners to Japanese warriors, to the newest generations of boat people. It is a region where a tumultuous natural regime has been matched by a vigorous and cosmopolitan cultural environment.

Over 120 people attended the conference, to hear papers presented by speakers from all over Australia, as well as from neighbouring countries New Zealand, New Guinea, Indonesia and Taiwan. From the inspiring opening address by Senator Bob Collins through to the rapporteur’s summary the papers were of outstanding quality. For reasons of space, only a selection of them can be published here, but copies of most of the papers which have not been published are available on application to the conference convenor.

The core conference program was supplemented by excursions to near-Darwin sites of interest, and by workshops on ‘Conflicting Cultural Values’ and the ICOMOS Burra Charter.

On behalf of the conference organising committee I would like to most sincerely thank all those who presented papers at the conference. The organisation of a major conference in Darwin, where there exists only a small group of ICOMOS members and supporters, was a task which imposed heavy burdens on a few people. That the task was successfully achieved is due to the commitment of the conference committee, for which I have been most grateful.

Gratitude is also most sincerely expressed to the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, the Australian Heritage Commission, and to the Northern Territory Ministers Hon. Shane Stone (Minister for Asian Relations and Trade) and Hon. Steve Hatton (Minister for Aboriginal Development) for their financial support of the conference. The conference was also supported by Thrifty Car Rentals (Darwin) and by Dames and Moore. The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory also contributed ‘in kind’ support. Without the tangible support of those organisations the conference could not have been held.

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