editorial

Age of redundancy: redundant sites and buildings – whose responsibility?
Launceston conference
May 1994

This volume of Historic Environment contains the papers presented at the 1994 Launceston ICOMOS Conference ‘Age of redundancy: redundant sites and buildings – whose responsibility?’ The aim of the conference was to examine the responsibilities of government, owners, heritage bodies and individuals for the growing number of redundant sites and buildings in the community, and explore how this issue of redundancy might be managed.

The Conference Organising Committee was pleased with the success of the conference, which attracted over 160 participants and over 40 papers. While the re-use of a redundant railways workshop building as the conference venue created an unforgettable and challenging, if somewhat cold, experience, the participants’ interest level was high and the conference generated a considerable amount of useful discussion.

Although it is almost four years since the conference took place, the issues raised and explored are still as valid. In fact, since the scale of redundant buildings and sites has not diminished, these issues are now possibly even more valid. In Tasmania, the first historic heritage legislation has been enacted, and Tasmania will now have to seriously confront the issue of retaining significant historic heritage, including all the management problems associated with avoiding redundancy. In an Australia-wide context, it is hoped that the outcomes of this conference may provide a useful background for the recently initiated Federal Government review of Commonwealth-owned heritage properties. The review is aimed at producing a strategy for the identification, maintenance, use and disposal of these properties, and it is anticipated that the conference outcomes will also be of use to those implementing such a strategy.

The conference was designed to develop and improve communication between the broad range of people involved in the management of redundant sites and buildings. That is governmental agencies, local government, building owners, builders, heritage professionals and the communities in which these places are located. This volume is published with this level of communication in mind.

The committee hopes that this volume will provide a useful handbook for tackling issues of redundancy. While the scope of the papers is not comprehensive, they provide important insights into the reasons buildings become redundant, factors resulting in redundancy, how the scale of the problem might be lessened, evaluating the costs of retention versus replacement, who is and should be involved, and the choices that are available for re-use and management of redundant places.

This volume contains all the papers from the conference, rather than a selection, as we felt that all the papers made an important contribution to the discussion, each one raising new and different issues or proposing alternative solutions. A number of papers were not submitted for publication, and where this is the case, the abstract for the relevant conference paper has been printed to give the readers an idea of the scope of the conference and the broad range of issues that were raised and considered important. Also not included in this volume are the results from the workshops that were held. While the workshops were useful summing up and ‘future directions’ sessions, the documentation from the workshops was not available for inclusion.
The success of the conference was due, to a large extent, to the financial and ‘in kind’ support that it received from the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (Department of Environment and Land Management), the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the then Tasmanian Forestry Commission (now Forestry Tasmania), the Australian Heritage Commission and the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development through its Better Cities program. Qantas was the official airline for the conference. The conference committee sincerely thanks these agencies and organisations for their generous support.

The conference committee would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided papers to the conference. It was their acknowledgment of the issue of redundancy as a serious and real heritage management problem, and their enthusiasm to review and examine the issue that made the conference a success. The committee members also extend their thanks to Ian Terry for assistance in production of this volume, and to the ICOMOS executive and *Historic Environment* editors, Jane Harrington and Alex Kaplan, for their support in producing this volume, thus ensuring the ideas and information presented at this important conference can be widely disseminated.