This issue of *Historic Environment* is the first to be distributed to members and subscribers of Australia ICOMOS as well as to members and subscribers of the Council for the Historic Environment. In their roles and purposes, in their interests and activities, and in their membership, these two bodies overlap considerably. It is therefore appropriate that this first joint issue is devoted to the proceedings of a conference which, although it was convened by Australia ICOMOS, was held in Victoria and relied upon the efforts of many who are members of the Council for the Historic Environment.

It will also be appropriate to introduce their new bedfellows to the established readers of this journal, as it is to explain the nature of the conference proceedings which follow. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a non-government organisation closely linked to UNESCO. It has national committees, of which Australia ICOMOS is one, in a number of countries: in others it has individual members. In a few it has no presence at all. The international bible of ICOMOS is the Venice Charter, which sets out mutually agreed philosophy and principles for the conservation and restoration of sites and buildings. Undeniably, however, this charter has its deficiencies in scope, emphasis, self-consistency and in translation between the four languages in which it is expressed. Despite these acknowledged faults it has not yet been possible to secure international agreement on a programme of amendments.

By way of clarifying and amplifying the principles of the Venice Charter, Australia ICOMOS has adopted its own manifesto, known as the Burra Charter, which itself is now widely accepted by private practitioners and government bodies in Australia. It has also in operation or in preparation, a series of subsidiary documents designed to suggest detailed procedures for various aspects of conservation work within the terms of the Burra Charter. Of these documents perhaps the most important is one adopted on a trial basis in February 1982 as a guide to the manner of preparing conservation analyses and conservation plans. A conservation analysis is the whole process of investigating, documenting and recording a place which, in the
case of buildings, has commonly been known in the past as an historic structure report. It is distilled into a single coherent document which concludes with a statement of significance (essentially a citation), explaining the importance of the place sufficiently clearly and succinctly to establish the basis of a conservation policy.

The purpose of the conference held at Ballarat and Geelong in February 1983 was to review the operation of the guideline document in relation to conservation analyses and to identify any aspects which might require amendment or refinement before that part of the document could be adopted for continuing use. The conference was therefore structured about four papers; assessing the guidelines in relation to Aboriginal sites, industrial/historical sites, buildings, and urban conservation areas. On the final day working groups discussed each of these subject areas, and in three of the four cases, recommended certain amendments to the document, and when these were reported at the final plenary session the four rapporteurs were directed to confer upon these recommendations and to reconcile them into a single proposal for adoption by Australia ICOMOS at a future meeting.

The Guidelines had not in fact been substantially applied by practitioners in Australia in the twelve months since they were first adopted, but it was clear at the conference that they were generally regarded as satisfactory, and the proposed amendments from all quarters affected only a small proportion of the whole document so far as it related to conservation analyses. Far less consensus exists in relation to the second part of the document, relating to conservation plans, which was not under consideration at the conference. This attempts to enunciate general principles for enunciating and implementing a conservation policy appropriate to the established significance of a place. If this sounds simple, or even trivial, it should be understood that this would be a single code embracing procedures as diverse as the physical restoration of a building and the management of a historical park. Australia ICOMOS operates on the basis that uniform principles should apply in such cases, but to establish and express these principles will be a major task in the months ahead.
For many of our readers, perhaps, the reports which follow will be less of interest for the implications in relation to the final form of the documents under review. They will be more valuable as an overview of the state of the art of conservation - or at least of conservation investigation - right across the range of disciplines involved, and right across the nation. There are few countries in the world in which the art is in so healthy a state; at least so far as conservation doctrine is concerned. In terms of conservation practice much remains to be done, and it is in the interests of both our bodies that this same multidisciplinary and national approach be maintained in future issues of this journal.

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