Group discussion

Issue: In professional practice, where is Australia ICOMOS at with cultural landscapes and where is it going?

The group saw the conference as a learning exercise. It was clear from the conference papers and discussions that ICOMOS has a role to facilitate further development of cultural landscape identification and conservation methodologies. In particular, community involvement was seen as an important part of cultural landscape management. The group also noted that cultural landscapes are dynamic.

The process of understanding cultural landscapes requires different techniques, and being explicit about the values of different groups for whom the cultural landscape has meaning.

There is a need for ICOMOS to assist in:

- Professional development so that heritage professionals are armed in the field with tools and standards for addressing cultural landscapes, and can communicate clearly with different groups of interest (stakeholders) about what cultural landscape values are and how they might be managed.
- Working out ways of bringing people along with the process of identifying and conserving significant cultural landscapes — the group considered that this is not usually part of the consulting process, and community participation is time-consuming and therefore potentially costly.
- Developing a sense of community ownership through the process of undertaking heritage surveys.

The group further discussed what the role of ICOMOS is or is not:

- It is not a lobby group.
- It develops professional standards and methodologies.
- It has a public education role, including conducting training workshops and being proactive in the heritage industry.

ICOMOS should run a workshop on cultural landscapes:

- The concept is now beginning to be embraced by councils — they are often looking for models and techniques to apply for their own particular environmental management needs and problems.
- It might be practical, for example, for ICOMOS to engage in partnerships with state heritage agencies, bringing local government bodies together for training/educational workshops.
- A workshop could focus on how to handle community opposition (eg. small group discussion) and to devise an education strategy.

ICOMOS should be seeking to reintegrate cultural landscapes back into landscape management practices generally; that is, the landscape should be managed in a holistic manner.

notes by Joy McCann

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