This paper essentially is an exploration of the relationship that existed between Australia ICOMOS and the Port Arthur Historic Site from 1979 to 1987, during the term of the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project and the formative years of both Australia ICOMOS and the Australian Heritage Commission. The radically different demands placed upon the historic site by the Tasmanian Government from the 1970s to the 1980s are discussed as they impacted upon the fabric and meaning of the place. From its inception in the early 1970s as a historic site under the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Port Arthur and the Tasman Peninsula received substantial grants from the Commonwealth and then from the National Estate Grants Program administered by the Australian Heritage Commission. The requirements placed upon the historic site planners were strongly influenced by Australia ICOMOS and its close, if not inseparable, relationship with the Australian Heritage Commission.

A particular focus of the paper is the exploration and the restoration of meaning that took place during the management planning process that extended from 1975 to 1985. With the lapse of the involvement of the Australian Heritage Commission and the concomitant severing of close ties with and professional overseeing by Australia ICOMOS, those directions were substantially reversed in the 1990s as management outcomes were redirected and dependency upon tourism as an income-raising enterprise become the focus of the historic site management activities. That shift is represented in the 1996 amendments to the 1985 Port Arthur Historic Site Management Plan (National Parks and Wildlife Service) that were drafted by the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority. Following the 1996 tragedy, there was an inquiry into the operations of the management authority. The board of the authority was reconstituted with several ex-office bearers of Australia ICOMOS taking up appointments. The links between the historic site and Australia ICOMOS were further revitalised with the endorsement of a conservation plan prepared by Godden Mackay and Context; the directors of these firms being long-standing members of Australia ICOMOS.

Port Arthur Historic Site

The historic site of Port Arthur is extraordinarily complex, comprising modern tourist amenities, standing and occupied historic residences, ruins of penal and industrial structures as well as sub-surface and maritime archaeological resources. Three major epochs are represented at the site. The convict era extended from roughly 1830 to 1877, the township period from approximately 1884 until 1974. It was during this period that the rural community of Carnarvon was founded, reverting in the 1920s to its earlier name of Port Arthur but continuing to be a small town community (Davidson 1995; Weidenhofer 1981). During the third epoch, when the place was operated as an historic site, there were radical transformations to the landscape with the addition of major infrastructure developments. The place as we see it today is very much a product of these three forces at work over the past 175 years.

Port Arthur, as Australia's foremost cultural heritage site, can be viewed as a reflection of the policies of national and state governments, and the application of heritage expertise over the past three decades. The transformation of Port Arthur from a rural township into a historic site was a gradual process initiated as early as 1916 with the scenic icons at Port Arthur being acquired by the Scenery Preservation Board. A key action during this period was the acquisition over local opposition of the town hall that the citizens of Carnarvon had rebuilt on the burned and razed foundations of the penal-period asylum. The town hall was remodelled in the 1970s by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, referred to as the asylum, and today serves as one of the focal points for site interpretation and merchandising.

Australian Heritage Commission

David Yencken, Chair of the Interim Committee and then Chairman of the Australian Heritage Commission and Reg Walker, Secretary General of the Australian Council of National Trusts, in the early 1970s collaborated in the development of a multi-dimensional approach to conserving Australia's National Estate. This consisted of the following:

- Commonwealth legislation to establish the Register of the National Estate and its keeper, the Australian Heritage Commission;
- at the citizens level, the support of voluntary groups such as the National Trust;
- at the professional level, the promotion of an Australia ICOMOS;
- the endorsement of training programs such as the materials conservation program at the then Canberra College of Advanced Education; and,
- an incentives scheme based upon the National Estate Grants Program.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Rhys Jones.

Without his advice and encouragement my family would not have had a Port Arthur experience.
The approach to the conservation of the National Estate fostered by Walker and Yencken was both visionary and reactionary. The vision was, in hindsight, an overwhelming success as Australia went from 'heritage terminator' to that of a major power in national and international heritage conservation over the next decade. The success of the linkage between the Australian Heritage Commission, the National Estate Grants Program and Australia ICOMOS with its Burra Charter, the latter document being stapled to the National Estate Grants Program application forms (Max Bourke, pers. comm.), provided an almost instantaneous acceptance of a national set of professional heritage conservation standards.

**Australia ICOMOS**

Australia ICOMOS was founded under the patronage of the Australian Heritage Commission in 1976. The close link between the Australian Heritage Commission and Australia ICOMOS is demonstrated by the opening of the first meeting of Australia ICOMOS in 1978 at Beechworth in eastern Victoria (Australia ICOMOS 1978). The conference was titled 'The Tide of Australian Settlement - conservation of the physical evidence', and was opened by the then Chairman of the Australian Heritage Commission, David Yencken. In a paper entitled 'Future Pleasure From The Past?' John Mulvaney, never shying from confrontation, quoted from the writings of Majorian in AD 458:

> ...public buildings, in which all the ornament of the city [Rome] consisted, have been destroyed with the criminal permission of the authorities on the pretext that the materials were necessary for public works. The splendid structures of ancient buildings have been overthrown, and great has been everywhere destroyed in order to erect little

then went on to state that: 'The days of the monopolist architect restorer are numbered' (Mulvaney 1978: 59, 65). It is apparent that from an early date Australia ICOMOS had an archaeological bent. Present at that meeting were both Frank Bolt, the guiding hand behind the National Parks and Wildlife Service 1975 plan for Port Arthur, and Ken Latona, the author of the 1982 draft plan for the historic site.

**National Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania and Port Arthur**

The enactment of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970 led in the following year to the Service assuming responsibility for Port Arthur. Management of the site was focused upon flowing and flushing; water supply and disposal of sewerage. The staff on site was small but had responsibility for the entire Tasman Peninsula and interlocked with the management staff of Maria Island. All specialist staff were in Hobart, at a distance from the impact of their decisions. Frank Bolt commenced the preparation of a management plan for Port Arthur Historic Site as part of the National Parks and Wildlife Service requirements and a growing awareness of the need to plan for heritage places (refer also to Department of Home Affairs and Environment 1981). It has been suggested that the 'moment in time' approach fostered at Colonial Williamsburg, either directly or indirectly, served as a model for the restoration to the convict era of historic structures at Port Arthur. Interestingly, Mulvaney (1978) refers to Williamsburg as the eventual triumph of archaeologist over restoration architects.
• Point Puer reserve be extended;
• exclusion of vehicles from the historic site be an urgent priority;
• parking be provided, leaving 4 to 8 minutes walk to the central core;
• there be provision for transport for ‘disabled’ people;
• modern buildings be screened from view (refers to motel and works yard);
• the sale of drinks, food and merchandise not be permitted south and west of the bay;
• picnic facilities not be located adjacent to the historic core;
• sub-surface foundations of ruins not be excavated and delineated;
• ‘site beautification’ and ‘tidying up’ be avoided;
• original materials be used in restoration works; and,
• there be no recreations of earlier structures, only consolidation.

The comments by the Australian Heritage Commission close with a call for the urgent redrafting of the management plan and the establishment of a small team to ‘supervise conservation on Tasman Peninsula’ and to ‘help improve conservation expertise in Tasmania as a whole’ (refer also to Australian Heritage Commission 1982). Given the above requirements, the Australian Heritage Commission endorsed the sum of $9,500,000 as proposed for the conservation and development program. As will be discussed later, some of the 1978 Australian Heritage Commission ‘requirements’ have been maintained to this date but others have been eroded, markedly altered or ignored through time.

Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project

In 1979, nine million dollars in Commonwealth and state funds were allocated under the Urban and Regional Development (Financial Assistance) Act 1974 over a seven-year period, 1979 to 1986, to the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project (Egloff 1986). As the 1975 Plan specified that infrastructure developments would be located within the core of the historic site, with structures dating to the post-convict era being removed, and stated that convict-era features were to be modified for management purposes (NPWS 1975), the plan obviously required urgent redrafting. Of considerable concern was the adaptation of the historic cottages into residences for the park rangers.

In 1982 Latona Masterman Associates (NPWS 1982), a consulting firm from Sydney, prepared a draft plan. Although moving in the correct direction, the draft specified the removal of historic features that the local community valued, such as the World War I memorial avenue of cypress trees and St David’s Church. For the most part, features scheduled for removal were those associated with the Carnarvon period of the historic site, which is of particular interest and in danger of being lost.

A decade after the drafting of the 1975 plan, a new plan was approved. It stressed the maintenance of the site’s authenticity and assigned infrastructure development to locations outside of the visual catchment of the historic site. The plan sought to integrate Port Arthur within the penal heritage of the Tasman Peninsula and the State (NPWS 1985).

The statement of cultural significance in the 1985 plan says:
(i) because the site is a major physical demonstration of the lives, customs, processes and functions of an early Australian penal settlement, and its transformation into the township of Carnarvon, which is of particular interest and danger of being lost.

(ii) because of the inherent associations of the site with the Australian convict system, and the role this system played in the economic, social and cultural development of the state of Tasmania in particular, and the nation in general.

(iii) because of the townscape and landscape values of the Site, and in particular the degree of unity of materials, form and scale, and the contribution of the setting in the landscape

(iv) because many of the buildings and structures within the site are important and scarce examples of their type.

This was the first time that the cultural significance of Carnarvon and the landscape values of the place were formally recognised in a planning document. With respect to values, the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project (PACDP) brought about a series of key initiatives:

• the decision that exclusive emphasis on the convict era was contrary to the requirements of the Burra Charter, and that the significance of the Carnarvon township period needed to be addressed;

• landscapes both close to structures and the visual catchment became an important factor in the conservation process (refer to J. Egloff 1989a and 1989b);

• methods for stabilising coursed masonry structures were developed and received engineering awards;

• an education program linked to the state education department was promoted with an emphasis upon the value of a Port Arthur experience within the formal secondary education system (Boyer 1989);

• the site and the Tasman Peninsula as a training ground for professionals was fostered through summer programs that integrated archaeological, architectural and historical students as a by-product of the Project’s need to have well-trained volunteers to undertake its research using these disciplines and especially to develop standardised recording and analytical systems for physical fabric investigation;

• the publication of a historical site procedural guide that was one of the first in the English-speaking world (Allen 1980; Davis and Buckley 1987);

• a program was initiated to involve PACDP staff in both private conservation projects on convict-era sites on the Peninsula and at other NPWS convict-era estate throughout Tasmania;

• in order to keep attuned to local/community heritage values, the PACDP required all staff to be permanently domiciled either on the site or in adjacent buffer real estate and thus to interact with and become part of the local community; and,

• the Tasman Peninsula Historical Society was initiated to accommodate the continual involvement of the locals and facilitate their regular input with respect to community heritage concerns.

A four-year PACDP proposal

As the initial seven-year project drew to an end, a proposed four-year program to extend the PACDP was prepared by Peter Boyer in publication form and submitted to the state government (Tasmanian NPWS nd). It was some time before the Minister responsible for the NPWS raised the matter with the Commonwealth government. The program had seven major goals:
• Coal Mines (convict mining development) conservation and presentation;
• Model Prison (partially rebuilt ruin) conservation and interpretation;
• presentation to the public of Port Arthur and the Coal Mines as a Bicentennial year feature;
• development of visitor facilities at Port Arthur;
• comprehensive research and conservation planning for all of the National Estate elements of the Tasman Peninsula;
• assessment and conservation of Point Puer ruins, the site of the infamous boys’ prison; and,
• expansion of the Historic Conservation Area programs that provide assistance to owners of heritage sites.

The proposal stressed the integration of Port Arthur as a multi-faceted site with the entire corpus of both built and natural heritage places on the Tasman Peninsula. However, the proposal was doomed from the outset. At the Tasmanian state level, Robyn Gray, the Premier, was smarting from the covert support that the NPWS, in his mind, had given to the anti-Gordon below the Franklin dam protest. He had immediate plans to dismember the NPWS and divest the state of its built heritage resources, some going to the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) others to agencies such as the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority. The Commonwealth most reluctantly had committed between five to eight million dollars a year to compensate the Tasmanian government for foregoing the construction of the dam within the South West Wilderness World Heritage Area. There was no hope that the Commonwealth would provide further heritage funds to Tasmania.

After the AHC, ICOMOS and the PACDP

The Tasmanian Government vacillated on the future of the historic site and the momentum developed by the PACDP diminished as key expertise departed. By 1987, the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority had been established under state legislation and the NPWS shifted its Tasman Peninsula operations out of the historic site. By the 1995-1996 financial year, State Government grants had been reduced to nothing as the historic site was required to become financially self-sufficient. Marketing and the raising of funds, through, at times, site-damaging activities, were emphasised. That direction was intensified in 1995 when the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority was accorded the status of a ‘Government Business Enterprise’ (GBE) with a Board of Directors. The Authority sought to construct a visitor facility and install a sound and light show; and, to seek corporate sponsorship for specific conservation projects. The Corporate Plan of the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (PAHSMA) stated that:

Until such times as developments proposed in this plan have been completed, and the revenue predicted is available, the Authority, is not in a position to fund conservation works on heritage buildings and structures to the extent required to meet its obligations.

Following the tragedy of 28 April 1996, the Prime Minister, John Howard, visited the site and acted upon a request by the Board of Management for an allocation of 2.5 million dollars specifically to replace the Broad Arrow Café. The Australian Heritage Commission objected immediately and was met with a hostile reaction from the Prime Minister’s department. The Prime Minister refused to accept that Section 30 could be applied to his actions, and declined the Commission’s advice. The Section 30 advice provided by the Australian Heritage Commission is comprehensive and explicit in its objection to the proposed development, as was earlier advice (Doyle 1997: Attachment 3). That the development was able to proceed in the light of such strong opposition reveals a fundamental flaw in how we Australians manage our heritage. Political forces can and do unite with single-interest parties and override the spirit of existing legislation with, at times, catastrophic outcomes. The Australian Heritage Commission, despite the Prime Minister’s rebuff and the usual threats of abolition, played a very active role in the modification of the proposed visitor centre, in the dropping of the sound and light show, screening of the parking and the downgrading of the scale of the building.

The local community was incensed with the Board’s general mismanagement and overspending while heritage specialists were concerned with the inappropriate and flawed planning of the visitors centre. Public protest and concerns over the lingering impact of the tragedy on the local economy brought about the appointment by the Premier of the State of Tasmania of a Special Commissioner to identify major issues and make recommendations. The Auditor-General conducted a special investigation ‘associated with preservation and maintenance of the Port Arthur Historic Site’. The Doyle (1997) report censured the Board of Management and concluded that the multi-tiered car park and visitor centre were incorrectly located within the historic site but that the developments were too advanced in construction to be abandoned. The Auditor-General (1997) expressed concern that the number of planning documents presumably guiding site management and conservation was excessive.

Visions for the historic site

A recap of the various visions graphically illustrate that the heritage values of the Port Arthur Historic Site and the Tasman Peninsula would have been dealt with in remarkably different fashions depending upon which scenario was realised.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service vision of 1975 comprised the following actions:
• reconstruction of key features;
• establishing vehicle parking in the core of the historic site;
• merchandising within the historic site;
• restoration of historic buildings for management housing purposes;
• exposure and rebuilding of foundations of ruins; and,
• reconstruction of ruins such as the Magazine Tower, Commandants Office and Government Cottage.

The Australian Heritage Commission/ICOMOS vision of 1978 sought:
• stabilization not reconstruction of ruins;
• a Tasman Peninsula conservation team of trained specialists;
• contribution to state-wide heritage expertise;
• exclusion of vehicles and recreation from the core of the historic site;
• exclusion of merchandising;
• no programs of beautification; and,
• the removal of "transitional", non-convict-era historical buildings.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service vision of 1981 tried to bring together its earlier plan with the requirements of the Australian Heritage Commission with:
stabilisation not reconstruction;
a Tasman Peninsula conservation team of trained specialists;
contribution to state-wide heritage expertise;
vehicles excluded from the core of the historic site;
car park area designated outside the visual catchment; and
non-convict historical buildings to be removed ('transitional')
The Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project (PACDP) vision of 1985 was the first to incorporate Carnarvon-era structures as part of the historic fabric of the site and to stress landscape values as well as:

stabilisation not reconstruction;
a Tasman Peninsula conservation team of trained specialists;
contribution to state-wide heritage expertise;
exclusion of vehicles from the core of the historic site with the car park area designated behind Scorpion Rock;
recognition of the Carnarvon period (previously termed 'transitional'); and,
no restoration of historic buildings for management housing purposes.

The four-year extension to the PACDP would have emphasised the following, in addition to conservation work and the development of visitor facilities at Port Arthur:

- Coal Mines (convict mining development), conservation and presentation;
- Comprehensive research and conservation planning for all of the National Estate elements of the Tasman Peninsula;
- Expansion of the Historic Conservation Area programs that provides assistance to owners of heritage sites;
- Definition of the Core of the Port Arthur Historic Site varied, for example:
  - The 1975 plan considered the sector south of Champ Street to be the historic core;
  - The 1978 Australian Heritage Commission review of the plan stated that the core is west and south of the cove; and,
  - The 1985 plan of the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project considered the visual catchment to comprise the core of the historic site.

Amendments of 1996
The 1996 amendments to the 1985 Port Arthur Historic Site Management Plan is the statutory document that PAHSMA was required to follow to the best of its ability (PAHSMA 1996a and 1996b). There were very few changes between the draft that was circulated for public comment and the final version that was accepted in unseemly haste to enable construction of the car park and visitors centre. In addition to the already in-process infrastructure development within the core of the historic site, the following were called for:

- partial or full removal of the Broad Arrow Café (this is a change from the draft plan that specified removal);
- maintenance of community green (the cricket pitch);
- convict tramway, possible reconstruction;
- restoration of gardens at the Magistrates staff offices, the restored Roman Catholic Chaplain's and the Medical Officer's restored museum;
- plans to open a new public jetty off the site and to close the present jetty.

The key document referred to in the amendment is a Strategic Management Plan. That plan appears not to have been widely circulated or made available for public comment. The 1996 amended management plan has policy changes that, if not dealt with in a reasonable fashion, could markedly alter the historic fabric of the place. For instance, 'no new structure will be constructed within the core site area except...conservation reconstructions provided for in the Conservation Management Plan and Interpretation Plan'. In a similar vein, 'no site element shall be removed unless it is considered intrusive by the Interpretation Plan and/or Conservation Management Plan and is approved by the Board'. Under this complex set of interlocking set of plans, the brief to reconstruct or remove was entirely outside of the public or professional review process.

Since 1996
Following the Doyle report, important steps have been taken to place the historic site within a 'best practice' conservation mode of operation. Stress has been taken off the income-raising potential of the place and the state government has allocated considerable funds in the long term to undertake heritage conservation on the Tasman Peninsula. For the first time since the PACDP there has been an acknowledgment that it is all but impossible for the management of a complex historic site to derive income sufficient to both conserve the asset and to present it to the public. This action more than any other has served to raise the spirits of the historic site staff following the years of penny-pinching by the state government. The Board of Management of the historic site now includes members of Australia ICOMOS as does the Heritage Advisory Panel.

Conclusions
It is apparent that the 1975 vision of the National Parks and Wildlife Service for Port Arthur, based most likely on the Williamsburg model, was considerably different from that which evolved under pressure by the Australian Heritage Commission and its fellow traveller, Australia ICOMOS. Not only would the historic site have been different if the 1975 plan had been implemented, but had the vision of the 1985 Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project been carried forward, the site would be quite different today. Particularly, there would be a considerable emphasis on the duality of the place, both as Port Arthur and as Carnarvon, and infrastructure would lie outside of the core of the historic site. The overall vision of the PACDP was to maintain the authenticity of the place, be that convict or township, and to soften the impact of management activities. It was asserted by the PACDP that the value of Port Arthur is not that it is a quaint melange of prison ruins but that it epitomises the transformation of a convict landscape into an
Australian township and a transference of values from the past into the present. Without the emphasis on this linkage and transformation, the value of the place is so distorted that it appears to have no relevance or lessons to offer from the past to contemporary Australian society.

The 2000 Conservation Plan deals for the most part with the site's historic features and as such sits uncomfortably between the 1985 (amended 1996) Port Arthur Historic Site Management Plan and the yet-to-be-crafted secondary plans that will treat in detail the management of landscape, built elements, etc. The impact of this plan on the overall conservation of the place has yet to be tested. Just how the plan will influence the trajectory of modernisation and expansion of visitor facilities, site landscape beautification and the ever-present demands for visitor entertainment that distort the messages of Port Arthur and the township of Carnarvon has yet to be determined.

The problem that bedevilled Port Arthur in the past, that being the faith that is placed upon those in charge, be they the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project or the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, to undertake responsible conservation of the historic site has lessened. The alliance between the Australian Heritage Commission and Australia ICOMOS and key staff that maintain a corrective balance between conservation and development at the historic site of Port Arthur and Carnarvon has been restored. The unrelenting pressure on the historic site to yield returns through tourism which, in the past, made it all but impossible to stand back and look at how sustainable were the historic values of the place, has been diminished by recent state government allocations separating funding for conservation from that for management.

The post-1996 Board of Management and the 2000 Conservation Plan have sought to tip the balance back towards best conservation practice.

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