Jill Sheppard

Jill Sheppard is an architect employed by Godden Mackay Pty Ltd heritage consultants. She has been actively involved in a wide range of conservation studies for historic and industrial sites over the last five years. These include a current study of the Lake Margaret Power Station for the Hydro Electric Commission of Tasmania and development of a type profile and methodology for the national study of the Australian Electricity Supply Industry Research Board Heritage. A Management Framework for Power Generating Assets.

Power stations [abstract]

The power industry, which has operated in Australia for some 140 years, is a relatively young one which developed to a large extent along state lines, according to the natural resources of each state. Recent developments within the industry have tended to be refinements on the original principles. Five major power producer types are identified: thermal, diesel, gas turbine, hydro and gas suction.

Major changes are proposed for the industry from 1995. The 1992 Industry Commission Report on Energy Generation and Distribution argued that the generating sector structured in each state as a monopoly is potentially competitive and that there are substantial gains in efficiency to be realised under the impact of competition. A national grid and free trade in bulk electricity for customers requiring ten mega-watts or more is proposed. The governments of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland agreed to work toward the implementation of the multiple network corporation model by July 1995. South Australia and Tasmania reserved their positions but are likely to join the network. This national grid approach will put additional pressure on borderline stations.

Other factors responsible for redundancy of power plant are:

- superseded equipment which can no longer compete economically
- the high land values of waterfront locations and million dollar views of metropolitan thermal stations
- the corrosive nature of the operation of thermal stations which by its operation is self destructing leaves a legacy of contamination on the site
- the pressure of ongoing interest charges on large capital investments targets the older stations with paid up capital
- isolation itself is a major issue for re-use options

Fortunately the issue of what to conserve out of the 250-odd major power stations in Australia is currently being addressed by the Australian Electricity Supply Industry Research Board who have recognised the importance of a strategy for dealing with their heritage resource. As a result Godden Mackay Pty Ltd were commissioned to develop a framework for the management of culturally significant assets; this has involved a national survey, preparation of an inventory format for comparison purposes, and the development of a typology and a set of significance assessment criteria specific to power generation assets which ties in with the state and national criteria. In this way the industry should be able to identify rare and significant stations at an early state and can plan for redundancies, taking heritage management into account from an early stage.