The Great Ocean Road, Victoria: a case study for inclusion in the National Heritage List

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Abstract
The Great Ocean Road, constructed by returned World War I soldiers between 1919 and 1932 is an important place in Australian tourism, and was included on the National Heritage List in 2011 for its historic, natural, scenic and social values. The Great Ocean Road’s status as a utilitarian and performative war memorial is its most significant story, despite having faded from popular understanding. The road was also constructed to open up the Victorian west coast to tourism, a continuation of the 19th century concern with building tracks and paths to organise the tourist view and experience wonder. With over seven million visits to the region annually, the road is simultaneously recognised for its association with tourism and also being managed to mitigate the tourism that threatens its scenic values. There are growing attempts to coordinate tourism planning through the National Landscapes program, and place management more generally through cooperation of the many public land managers to conserve its heritage values. This article will investigate the complex interrelationship between the diverse National Heritage values and their management, and argue for the need to privilege the preservation of scenic value over tourism as a social value due to its primacy as a prerequisite to tourist use. It will also investigate the claims of the Great Ocean Road as a cultural route versus historic road, and demonstrate despite evidence of international cultural transference of the concept of a purpose built road designed as a scenic route, the Great Ocean Road, undoubtedly an historic road, cannot be properly regarded as a cultural route.

Background
The Great Ocean Road is a journey of 242 km along the southern coast of Victoria between Torquay and Allansford. The road is two lane (one in each direction) with pullovers and lookout points for spectacular views of the coastline and Bass Strait seascape. The serpentine road weaves around coastal cliffs, past curving beaches into seaside towns closely bordered by dense native vegetation and through tall eucalypt forest with giant tree ferns in the Otway Ranges.

The idea to build a road to connect isolated timber and rural communities, coastal townships and provide access to the spectacular coastal scenery emerged in the late nineteenth century. However the project did not commence until the First World War when the Victorian state government Country Roads Board, the Ocean Road Trust and the federal government Repatriation Department conceived of the road to provide work for returned servicemen and as a utilitarian memorial to Australian First World War servicemen. The construction, from 1919 until 1932, involved significant fundraising activities, land sales and generous donations from the community.
In 1936 The Argus reported that the premier of Victoria unlocked the toll gates ‘and threw the road open for the free use of the public’. It stated that ‘the object was two-fold – to build a highway through some of the most majestic and beautiful scenery in Victoria, if not Australia, and to employ members of the A.I.F. (Australian Infantry Forces) returning from the war (The Argus 3 October 1936).

In the years following the First World War there was a ‘greatly increased interest in motoring. Organisations formed to promote motoring and touring became prominent and were well-reported in the press’ (Southern 1977:152). Engineer William Calder, the first Chair of the Victorian Country Roads Board, understood that this new motoring industry offered possibilities and constraints for road construction. In 1924 he travelled internationally for seven months investigating road construction. In his comprehensive report he noted that in America federal aid was not restricted to main roads but also contributed ‘even to roads of a purely scenic character which are not likely at any time to become economic roads’ (Calder 1925:66). The only scenic highway he visited in America was the Columbia River Highway, enthusing that ‘its main object is to display to the fullest advantage the scenic wonders for which nature has been so bountiful in this favoured locality’ (Calder 1925:67). He saw roads as the way to access scenic landscapes for recreational uses and also to ‘render them an asset of economic value’ (Calder 1925:67).

The Great Ocean Road has a prominent place in Australian cultural tourism. The overwhelming success of the vision to build the Great Ocean Road resulted in over seven million visitors to the region in 2011 (Tourism Victoria 2012). However, its entry into the National Heritage List on 7 April 2011 demonstrates that it is nationally significant against a broad range of criteria for its historic, natural, scenic and social values. In this article the road as a memorial and as an intentional construct to create a scenic tourist experience will be discussed in more detail when looking at the historic values and as an exemplar route of scenic journey, and its tourism value today as part of the discussion of social values. Finally, we will investigate the complexity of managing, and indeed balancing, these values for a road intentionally designed for recreational tourism.

There have been suggestions that the Great Ocean Road is a potential future World Heritage property as a cultural landscape (Faggetter 2001), inviting comparisons with places such as the Amalfi Coast in Italy (itself included in the World Heritage List in 1997) and California’s Big Sur. While recognising that the Great Ocean Road is a worthy contender, National Heritage assessment requires comparative analysis against other similar places in Australia.

The National Heritage List nomination, assessment and listing

The Great Ocean Road’s nomination for the National Heritage List had its genesis in two related nominations for places around the Otway region of Victoria – one concerning the forested areas of the Otway Ranges, including national parks, the other related to the rural landscape that was the subject of pioneering landscape protections through town planning processes. During the assessment process, the Australian Heritage Council considered the nominated areas as the study area, and based on its assessment of which areas might have National Heritage values, decided to alter the boundary of the area considered for assessment to focus on the road and its ‘scenic environs’ – principally, areas that contribute to the scenic-aesthetic experience of travellers along the route. While the historic value of the road and its scenic values may have been the starting point for the assessment, within this long, narrow area
a diverse array of natural phenomena were found. Coupled with this was the decision to consider Bells Beach for its social values associated with surfing and the social value of the entire road associated with tourism, and a complex, multifaceted assessment began to emerge drawing in experts from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and fields of expertise.

The assessment of the Great Ocean Road for the National Heritage List found that the road has historic significance for commemoration of the service of First World War servicemen, for making the west coast of Victoria accessible for recreational tourism, for its association with a pioneering planning mechanism to protect the coastal scenery and for several fossil sites including Australia’s most famous polar dinosaur fossil site. It also identified that the polar fossil record of the area is rare on both national and international scales, and that the diversity of geomorphological features found in Port Campbell limestone is also rare on a national scale.

The assessment identified that the Great Ocean Road has scientific significance for the remains of the construction workers’ camps for their potential to provide archaeological information about the lives of the workers during the construction period, and for the polar fossil records. It noted that Dinosaur Cove is internationally recognised for its contribution to our understanding of a polar environment in the Cretaceous period, while more recent fossil discoveries are contributing to an understanding of the evolution of marine species from the late Oligocene period. Due to their accessibility and the rapidly eroding coastline, the assessment considered that these locations are also important in helping the public understand Australia’s past. Additionally, the monitoring and research sites for the geomorphological processes of the Cretaceous coastline are of national significance.

Of particular relevance to this issue of *Historic Environment*, the assessment concluded that with a diversity of frequently changing and dramatic landscapes, the Great Ocean Road is an exemplar route of scenic journey within Australia. The principal characteristics include the intentionally designed route of the road, its key viewpoints and scenic lookouts positioned to take advantage of the coastal vistas and hinterland backdrops, and the unobtrusively engineered road works such as cuttings, drainage and retaining walls which allowed a natural aesthetic to dominate. The assessment considered the Port Campbell Limestone coast to be the definitive place in Australia to observe and study limestone geomorphology and coastal erosion processes on rocky coasts. This is in large part due to the rapid rate of erosion and spectacular, well-publicised stack collapses, but also due to the contrast between the younger elements at the Bay of Islands and the more eroded elements at the Port Campbell end.

The assessed aesthetic values of the Great Ocean Road comprised outstanding scenic landscape values and a diversity of natural landscapes, including the views from the Great Ocean Road and the Great Ocean Walk. The Twelve Apostles are of particular significance, as this distinctive and spectacular group of rock formations is widely recognised by the Australian community as an inspirational landscape evoking strong emotional responses. The assessment considered
the coastline from Lorne to Kennett River to offer among the world’s most dramatic cliff and ocean scenery that can be viewed from a vehicle. It also noted that the Great Ocean Road, the pullover points and lookouts beside or nearby the road provide travellers with spectacular views of the coastline, hinterland, and Bass Strait seascape, framed only by cliffs and lighthouses, and unencumbered by intrusive built structures. It also considered that the diverse and changing scenery along the route is intrinsic to the vast appeal of the coastline. The serpentine road weaves around coastal cliffs, past curving beaches into seaside towns closely bordered by dense native vegetation, and in the Otway Ranges, through tall eucalypt forest with giant tree ferns.

The assessment noted that the landscapes and views seaward from the Great Ocean Road are very well documented in print, film and digital media and have inspired works by significant artists, writers and photographers.

Bells Beach, an internationally renowned surfing location, and the Great Ocean Road landscape generally, being synonymous with tourism and holidays for many Australians, were recognised in the assessment for their social values. The road was also considered to have a special association with people who made a significant contribution to its creation, including the more than 3,000 former servicemen involved in its construction.

Despite the breadth of its values, we will explore its status as a cultural route and historic road, and focus on two aspects of its values in particular. Firstly, the ongoing relevance and importance of its origin as a utilitarian and indeed performative war memorial and the associated intangible values. This will include the potential role of its inclusion in the National Heritage List to rehabilitate this less scenic aspect of its significance, and the role that interpretation could play in drawing out its unique story. Secondly, the Great Ocean Road is in the curious position of being recognised for its association with tourism and at the same time having to mitigate the threat of tourism to its scenic values that gave rise to this association. Aspects of this threat have been explored by Faggetter (2001) in her comprehensive article which made a valuable contribution to the assessment of the Great Ocean Road for inclusion in the National Heritage List. We will explore this issue in the context of developing principles to assist the management of tourism as both a heritage value and a potential threat to heritage values.

The Great Ocean Road: a cultural route or historic road?

There is continuing debate internationally about the definitions applied to cultural routes and historic roads. More consideration is required to clarify the terminology and determine whether historic roads should be included within the category of cultural routes for World Heritage properties; whether they form a subset of cultural routes; or should be considered as a separate type of place.

The World Heritage Operational Guidelines state that the concept of heritage routes:

- is based on the dynamics of movement and the idea of exchanges, with continuity in space and time;
- refers to a whole, where the route has a worth over and above the sum of the elements making it up and through which it gains its cultural significance;
- highlights exchange and dialogue between countries or between regions;
- is **multi-dimensional**, with different aspects developing and adding to its prime purpose which may be religious, commercial, administrative or otherwise.

The Operational Guidelines go on to state:

- A heritage route may be considered as a specific, dynamic type of cultural landscape, just as recent debates have led to their acceptance within the *Operational Guidelines*.
- The identification of a heritage route is based on a collection of strengths and tangible elements, testimony to the significance of the route itself.
- The conditions of authenticity are to be applied on the grounds of its significance and other elements making up the heritage route. It will take into account the duration of the route, and perhaps how often it is used nowadays, as well as the legitimate wishes for development of peoples affected.

These points will be considered within the natural framework of the route and its intangible and symbolic dimensions.

By comparison, the Australia ICOMOS conference *Making Tracks* (2001) defined a cultural route as a ‘customary or regular line of travel for trade, social to cultural life, utilities, land management, tourism, or other cultural purpose’ (Blair 2002.2). This is undoubtedly a broader definition.

In considering the Great Ocean Road as a possible cultural route, historic road or cultural landscape, the road is the defining element – an intentional construct which created a journey linking the tangible and intangible cultural and natural values of the land and seascapes into an exceptionally rich aesthetic experience. The construction of the road ‘was unusual for the times as it was built on a completely new alignment and did not follow any existing track or foot path. It was purpose built as a scenic touring road …’ (Faggetter 2001). Calder was clearly influenced by scenic roads he visited in 1924, particularly the impressive Columbia River Highway which he considered ‘the finest scenic highway I have seen anywhere … those responsible possessed the artist’s gift of imagination, and the beauties of nature have not been marred by the necessary works of construction, which blend harmoniously with their surroundings’ (Calder 1925:109).

Calder realised the potential economic value of scenic roads purpose built for tourism in addition to their value as a scenic attraction. He saw Switzerland as a country which lacked natural resources and owed its prosperity ‘almost wholly to giving access to and encouraging tourists to visit their scenic resources’ (Calder 1925:67). Marriott has identified that the Columbia River Highway was inspired by the Axenstrasse in Switzerland and he noted the parallels in design between the Columbia River Highway and the Great Ocean Road (pers. comm. 3 May 2013), suggesting a cultural transference of the idea of a purpose built road designed as a scenic route.

**Figure 4:** On the section of the Columbia River Highway between Hood River and Mosier. (Source: William Calder 1924 – National Library of Australia)

**Figure 5:** A portion of the Columbia River Highway, east of Cascade Locks in Hood River County. (Source: William Calder 1924 - National Library of Australia)
The Great Ocean Road represented a specific design intention developed from the coastal region’s organically evolving pattern of habitation which had already given birth to townships, a timber industry and rudimentary and fragmented coastal transport links to support these functions (Faggetter 2001). The road demonstrably functions as an historic road and transport corridor. Can it also be considered as a cultural route? They operate at all scales – local, continental, transnational, so does it meet the criteria as a cultural route at a national level? It is an intentionally designed route, a scenic journey which integrates cultural and natural values, demonstrates tangible and intangible values, has continuity of function as memorial and scenic drive with recreational uses, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The Great Ocean Road creates a contemporary experiential journey through the landscape threading disparate elements of the natural and cultural environments into a rich experience of the area’s values. The Great Ocean Road demonstrates international cultural transference of a purpose built scenic road. Yet in comparison with the longevity or multi dimensionality of cultural exchanges that Indigenous routes in Australia can demonstrate, the Great Ocean Road cannot be identified as a cultural route but as an historic road at a national level – the only scenic journey in the National Heritage List.

The status of the Great Ocean Road as a scenic route is explicitly recognised in the official National Heritage values under criterion (d). It was found to demonstrate the principal characteristics of a ‘route of scenic journey’ as an:

Intentionally designed route … to facilitate public access to this spectacular coastline and provide views of diverse scenery from the road; its key viewpoints and scenic lookouts … are positioned to take advantage of the coastal vistas and hinterland backdrops; and the unobtrusively engineered road works such as cuttings, drainage and retaining walls … allow a natural aesthetic to dominate. (Department of the Environment 2011).

A place can be identified as both a cultural route or historic road and as a cultural landscape: a dynamic form of the ‘combined works of nature and of man’. While the Great Ocean Road could be designated as an organically evolved cultural landscape, the intentionally designed route is the more convincing category.

A utilitarian and performative war memorial

Most war memorials and monuments are performative, in the sense that the process of their coming into existence, involving the concentration of a community’s resources and intent, constitutes an important part of the memorialisation. In other words, the built fabric of a memorial is not only an interpretative device to convey the memory of those being memorialised, but is equally a physical manifestation of a community’s effort to demonstrate regard for the sacrifice of those being memorialised.

Faggetter (2001) argues that memorialisation of Victorians who served in WWI lay at the top of the hierarchy of motives of the Great Ocean Road Trust, the group of Geelong citizens who can be credited in large part with its realisation. This was partnered with the intention of giving employment to returned WWI servicemen in healthy, beautiful surroundings. Then there was the goal of improving transport and communications links between the existing coastal settlements, the aim of increasing land values along the coast, and finally, the vision of creating a major tourism asset.
For many of today’s Australians, the transport function and its corollary, coastal real estate made increasingly desirable by ever improving travel times to Melbourne, seem to be what the Great Ocean Road has come to symbolise, with its memorial function and story fading into the background, if known at all. Faggetter (2001) argued that its status as a war memorial is the Great Ocean Road’s most significant story, and it is not difficult to understand its significance from the way it is expressed in the National Heritage values under criterion (a), for historic value:

The construction of the memorial road combined substantial community fundraising efforts with the manual labour of returned servicemen. The road therefore represents a significant reminder of the participation of Australian servicemen in the First World War, the Australian community’s appreciation of their service by its desire to commemorate the servicemen in a grand manner, and the support provided for the continuing welfare of servicemen upon their return to Australia (Department of the Environment 2011).

It is this third dimension of the performative aspect of the Great Ocean Road as war memorial – as a means of providing support to those very people who it seeks to memorialise – that makes the Great Ocean Road so unlike other memorials, and lends the story a pathos that deepens its significance as a potentially unique narrative of memorialisation.

The formulation of the utilitarian war memorial per se was not without controversy in the years following WWI, in Australian communities as well as around the world. The Repatriation Commission supported ‘memorials of a useful nature’, whilst the RSL initially encouraged redirecting funds to needy families of those who served in preference to memorials, and some regarded monuments limited to a symbolic function as the only fitting tribute to those who served (Inglis 2008:131-2). There were more politically expedient reasons for the rise of utilitarian memorials, as noted by Inglis (2008:132):

The new language of commemoration was attractive to state and municipal politicians, especially when applied to such necessities as hospitals or roads, where a pound raised by subscribers to a memorial fund was a pound less to be found out of rates and taxes.

While the Chair of the Great Ocean Road Trust, Howard Hitchcock, also happened to be Mayor of Geelong at the time, his personal contribution in support of the proposal (including donating nearly £3000 of his own money) suggests that this cynical reason was not the paramount one. Perhaps it was closer to the views of the women of Mudgee in support of a utilitarian memorial for their town, as reported by the Mudgee Guardian (in Inglis 2008:133): ‘Their point of view was that a mere monument would become of no significance when memory vanished, whereas a memorial that had in it the virtue of human service would be a living witness’. At the time of the opening in 1939 of the Memorial Archway, the road was described as one of the most practical memorials to those who served in the Great War (The Argus 26 October 1939).

It is possible that the recognition of the memorial story as a National Heritage value for the Great Ocean Road will rehabilitate and reinscribe this aspect of significance in the public consciousness. Interestingly, this occurs at a time of substantial community discussion about the appropriateness and need for a national monument to the two World Wars in Canberra. There is potential for more coordinated and engaging interpretation of this aspect of its story, and inclusion in both the National Heritage List and the National Landscapes initiative (discussed more fully below) would appear to be the perfect opportunity to do so. The fabric of the road could eloquently speak of this story if only visitors could be made more aware – the length and location of the road itself is a testament to the efforts put in service of the memorialising intent of the road’s conceivers and labourers. This includes evidence of hand cutting of the enormous cuttings into the cliffs that required the repatriation workers to stay in long-term camps in order to complete particularly difficult sections of the road. It also includes the range of memorial plaques, sculptures and of course the arch at Eastern View, popularly understood to be the ‘beginning’ of the Great Ocean Road. These elements should be viewed as fabric in need of some subtle and coordinated interpretation, rather than being left as interpretative devices themselves. Indeed, the Minister’s decision to announce the National Heritage listing beside Julie Squires’s ‘The Diggers’ sculpture at Eastern View, signifies his interest in this aspect of the road’s story. Growing interest in this aspect of the story may also extend its significance.
as a cultural route, if it became a customary line of travel for the purpose of memorialisation.

Managing tourism as a value and as a threat to values

Tourist visitation figures confirm that the Great Ocean Road fulfilled its sponsors’ ambition to open up the south-west coastline of Victoria to leisure tourism. The National Heritage assessment recognised tourism both as an historic value and a social value, recognising the Great Ocean Road’s significance in the history of tourism in Australia and its contemporary significance as a tourism destination for Australians. In 2000, Faggetter noted the paradox of tourism on the Great Ocean Road – the road and its traffic, with the impact on local communities of ‘separating them from their beaches and bush’, is also the major economic asset for the region. At the time Faggetter wrote, there were 5 million visits to the region annually, but by 2010 this had risen 40% to over 7 million visits by Australians to the region annually (Tourism Victoria 2011). Tourism is a heritage value of the Great Ocean Road but it is also a threat to other values.

While the contemporary social significance of the Great Ocean Road for tourism is easy to grasp (if not to manage), the place of the Great Ocean Road in the history of Australian tourism needs further explanation. In charting the creation of Australian tourism in the nineteenth century, Julia Horne (2005) brings us right up to the period that just preceded the origin of the Great Ocean Road. Her thesis that ‘the pursuit of wonder was one of the driving forces of early tourists … the wonder expected to be inspired by a view, a geological formation, a botanical specimen’ (Horne 2005:8) makes it possible to understand why this coast, intermittently accessible at various points, was such a focus of energies just after the turn of the twentieth century.

Horne’s research on nineteenth century methods of opening up access to places of natural beauty suggests that the Great Ocean Road enterprise was, in part, a continuation of that process. In the nineteenth century, in places such as the Blue Mountains and Mount Wellington near Hobart, there was an emphasis on the building of tracks and paths to organise the tourist view and create the physical means of experiencing wonder. Although governments could be persuaded to invest in basic tourist infrastructure both for public recreation and to stimulate commercial activity, the lack of public money meant local communities needed to also contribute their own resources through a ‘committee-run trust’. Horne also notes that in many areas it was industries including logging that led the way for tourist developments (Horne 2005:151-6). She could have been precisely describing the process that led to the creation of the Great Ocean Road, except that the Great Ocean Road enterprise was on an unprecedented scale, designed as it was to make an entire coastline accessible for the newly invented motor car.

The National Heritage assessment sought to compare the role of the Great Ocean Road with other places in the context of Australia’s tourism history. In their ‘national history of tourism’, Davidson and Spearritt (2000) make only four direct references to the Great Ocean Road. It is the first-mentioned place under the chapter on roads for tourists (Davidson & Spearritt 2000:163-4). However, greater emphasis is given to the Pacific Highway for its overall effect on tourism, and in its discussion on coasts and beaches, a number of other places including St Kilda, Victoria; Manly, NSW; Bondi, NSW; and the Gold Coast, Queensland are given primacy (Davidson & Spearritt 2000:126-53).

However, no comparative information was found that considered the importance of the construction of a road of this scale for recreational tourism. It was considered likely that the Great Ocean Road was in a class of its own in this regard, and as stated in the statement of National Heritage values under criterion (a) (events and processes):

Figure 7: Historical tourist photo (Source: Charles Daniel Pratt & State Library of Victoria. (Ca. 1930)
Among the aims of the construction of the Great Ocean Road, and one of its achievements, was to make the west coast of Victoria accessible for recreational tourism. The Great Ocean Road Trust aspired to enable public access to the spectacular coastal vistas and adjacent landscapes through construction of the serpentine route through diverse natural environments. The construction of a road of this scale with recreational tourism among its aims illustrates an important stage in Australian tourism. (DSEWPaC 2011)

As previously noted, the Great Ocean Road was also found to have National Heritage values under criterion (g) (social value) for its contemporary importance to many Australians as being ‘synonymous with tourism’ (Department of the Environment 2011). This overt recognition of the heritage significance of the contemporary social value of tourism associated with the Great Ocean Road is refreshing in that it brings us closer to the wider social meaning of the place, but it poses an interesting conundrum. If tourism is both a value to be cherished and transmitted, and a potential threat, where does this place managers of its heritage values? While perhaps the most pressing human threat is residential ribbon development, particularly near the Torquay end, there are recent cases of proposed tourist development along the length of the Great Ocean Road that illustrate the dimensions of the potential tourism threat, from tourism facilities near the Twelve Apostles (Collins 2009) to hotel developments in sensitive coastal settings (Fyfe 2002).

It is possible that in negotiating the protections offered by the inclusion of the Great Ocean Road in the National Heritage List, an enterprising proponent for a tourism development along the Great Ocean Road could point to the heritage values of tourism in support of their development, perhaps in mitigation of an impact the development may have on another listed value. There is no doubt that the recognition of tourism as a ‘use value’ that lies at the heart of the Great Ocean Road’s raison d’etre suggests a level of tolerance for tourism infrastructure that may be greater than at other National Heritage places. However, the management of tourism development along the Great Ocean Road must recognise that the ongoing future of tourism on the Great Ocean Road is dependent on the conservation of scenic values. As such, if the two values come into ‘conflict’, as unhappily they might, a management approach should not permit a trade-off of these values, and rather seek a high quality resolution that conserves scenic values and through them, ultimately, the long term future of tourism.

Managing a complex place and asset

The Great Ocean Road is part of ‘Australia’s National Landscapes’, a joint Parks Australia and Tourism Australia program aimed at seamless integration of iconic Australian regions irrespective of state or municipal borders, for international tourism marketing and improved coordinated management of tourism and conservation outcomes (Department of the Environment 2012). Prior to the inclusion of the Great Ocean Road in the National Heritage List, Parks Australia organised a workshop for heritage place managers in the Great Ocean Road region together with Commonwealth and state heritage agencies and the Great Ocean Road National Landscape Steering Committee, which is charged with ‘local advocacy and implementation’ (Destination Management Planning Working Group 2012; Director of National Parks and Tourism Australia 2011:10). The timing of the Australia’s National Landscapes initiative and the National Heritage listing of the Great Ocean Road presents a strong opportunity to coordinate tourism and heritage management, provided the Great Ocean Road National Landscape Steering Committee includes this as a priority in its agenda.

As part of its responsibility to use best endeavours to ensure that a management plan is in place for a National Heritage place, the Heritage Division of the Australian Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities arranged a series of meetings in June 2011 to bring together all the major managers of land within the National Heritage boundary, including VicRoads, Parks Victoria, all four shires through which the Great Ocean Road travels (Surf Coast Shire, Colac – Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire and Moyne Shire) and the Victorian state Department of Sustainability and Environment. It also included representatives of Heritage Victoria. The meeting was a small but very important first step in bringing together all the varied managers to explain the significance of inclusion in the National Heritage List and to assist them to understand their part in the process of ongoing management and, importantly,
the potential opportunities this could present. In particular, the meetings indicated the very positive engagement of VicRoads, for which the inclusion of the Great Ocean Road in the National Heritage List is a testament to successful past management. This challenging road is VicRoads’ first asset included in the National Heritage List, and a strong theme of the meetings was the need to maintain both its use value and scenic values in an environment where safety could not be compromised. Early and regular consultation on long-term road improvement projects was encouraged as VicRoads builds up a familiarity with integrating management of a National Heritage place into its continuing maintenance and improvement of the road.

The Commonwealth is also leading the development of ‘Significant impact guidelines’, to assist in evaluating whether proposed interventions may have a significant impact on the National Heritage values of the Great Ocean Road and require assessment by the Commonwealth. These guidelines will provide additional assistance to land managing agencies, would-be proponents and the public as to the types of actions on or near the Great Ocean Road that would or would not likely to trigger closer scrutiny against the National Heritage values, thus enabling conservation of these values to be considered at the earliest possible stage in the project planning process.

An interesting aspect of the management of the heritage values of the Great Ocean Road relates to its aesthetic values, primarily its spectacular scenery and views, identified as nationally significant in the assessment. While the Great Ocean Road comprises these landscape values and could be considered as a series of cultural landscapes, the road provides the unifying concept and makes accessible the diverse and changing scenery.

While the statutory boundary of the Great Ocean Road National Heritage Listing is narrow, not much wider than the road itself for much of its length, as ‘matters of national environmental significance’ under the Commonwealth’s environment law, the Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the National Heritage values of the Great Ocean Road, including aesthetic values, are protected from significant impacts from actions irrespective of whether the actions occur inside or outside the place boundary. This presents the potential for (appropriately) strong protection for a place with aesthetic significance at a national level, but requires a good understanding from the land managers and cooperation with the Commonwealth to be effective.

**Conclusion**

The Great Ocean Road has long been recognised as a significant scenic journey and holiday destination, but there is potential for its inclusion in the National Heritage List to broaden public appreciation of its values, and in particular its role as a utilitarian and performative war memorial. Its inclusion also explicitly recognises the Great Ocean Road as a nationally significant route of scenic journey, but this does not mean that it would satisfy the internationally recognised definition of cultural route. This raises the question of whether there is a gap in international heritage categorisation, or whether the concept of ‘exchange’, so central to the understanding of cultural routes under the World Heritage system, remains an essential component of a route having outstanding universal value. Does the issue of continuity in space and time become the determining factor?

As a place with tourism as both a value and a threat to its values, the Great Ocean Road throws up a particular challenge for management. However, in the event of conflict between these values, it would seem a sound principle that the Great Ocean Road be managed on the basis that tourism as an ongoing social value is dependent on, and therefore subservient to, maintaining its nationally significant scenic values.
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