



Summary

The importance of heritage in our built environment is well established. A heritage item may be significant for aesthetic, historic, social, spiritual or technical reasons. Even where a building's heritage significance is recognised, the usefulness and long term viability of the structure (physical and financial) remain important considerations.

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) believes that at all levels of government, policies and funding are inadequately delivering the potential benefits to the broader community of heritage conservation initiatives. It is important that more rigour is applied to the listing of heritage buildings and places and that adequate funding and resources are available to assist owners of important structures.

The architectural profession has a responsibility to contribute to the conservation and understanding of the built environment. Creativity allied with design skills and an appreciation of the original are required for successful conservation and adaptive re-use.



Background

Since the 1930s the RAI (Royal Australian Institute of Architects) has been an active advocate of heritage conservation and has produced the seminal RAI Register of Significant 20th Century Buildings. The RAI reaffirms the responsibility of the architectural profession to contribute to the proper conservation and understanding of the natural and cultural environment, and in particular, the built environment. The Institute believes that those involved in the provision of advice regarding the conservation of buildings must be registered architects with an understanding of heritage issues, design skills, and appropriate knowledge and experience of construction and compliance.

The importance of heritage in our built environment is well established. A heritage item may be significant for aesthetic, historic, social, spiritual or technical reasons but whatever the reasons are, architects should play a significant role in the item's creation, conservation, adaptation and ongoing management and maintenance. Recent government reviews of heritage protection in Australia have identified the need for improvement in a number of areas, including, implementing more rigorous listing procedures for heritage items and providing more adequate assistance and resources for their ongoing well-being.

Most buildings require significant re-investment every 20 to 30 years. Even where a building's heritage significance is well established, the usefulness and long term viability of the building (physical and financial) remain important considerations.



Some buildings are of such significance that retention in their original or existing form is essential. In other cases it may be necessary for them to be upgraded to achieve compliance with current standards, and/or adapted for new uses in order to survive. Adaptive re-use involves appropriate and acceptable modification of the existing entity and perhaps sympathetic extensions, in order to reinvigorate the building and to achieve a dignified and viable future. To do this successfully it is always important to understand the significance of the place and its component parts, its context and setting, and the original design intent at the commencement of the process. Creativity allied with design skills as well as an appreciation of the original building are required. A sustainable future is assisted by the ongoing maintenance and appropriate use of existing buildings.

What Governments need to do

The listing of buildings and places on statutory heritage registers and planning instruments places obligations on owners with regard to retention and maintenance and so must be allied with appropriate government assistance. At all levels of government, policies and funding are inadequately delivering the potential benefits to the broader community of heritage conservation initiatives.

The RAIA recommends that Governments pursue:

- A more rigorous process for the listing of heritage items. Listing must be based on well researched significance



- The creation of new organisations and processes within the Commonwealth, States, Territories and local government to responsibly manage important heritage properties. These may include public/private ventures which secure the property, while enabling effective use, maintenance and a degree of public access. Several possible models exist in New South Wales.
- The provision of adequate funding and tax incentives for important buildings and places
- Increased funding for the provision of adequate training for heritage conservation, specifically for architects
- The involvement of appropriately skilled architects in relevant decision-making regarding the conservation of listed heritage buildings and places

What RAI A members need to do

The RAI A has established the following Principles for the guidance of, and implementation by, its members.

Principle 1

Conserve significant places of cultural heritage

- Take responsibility for ascertaining whether or not the architect's work is likely to affect a place of cultural heritage significance on their site or in the vicinity, including its context, and ensure that their work does not adversely affect any such place



Principle 2

Endorse and facilitate cultural heritage management

- Recognise obligations arising under international, Commonwealth, State, Territory and local government heritage listings and legislation, and RAIA Registers and listings as well as RAIA Heritage Criteria (see attached)
- Promote the need for cultural heritage conservation to client groups and government at all levels
- Accept the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter as a guiding document in the practice of architectural conservation
- Confirm the importance of architectural assessments of heritage items and ensure that they are undertaken by registered architects with a sound understanding of heritage issues and appropriate knowledge and experience of construction and compliance issues

Principle 3

Recognise and respect fellow professional and community groups engaged in cultural heritage management

- Recognise a number of disciplines involved in the assessment and management of cultural heritage, in particular historians, archaeologists and engineers
- Involve suitably experienced professionals
- Identify and consult key organisations (such as your State/Territory heritage agency) and community groups (such as the National Trust of Australia) involved in conservation



- Consult relevant stakeholder groups when carrying out assessments or proposing changes to a place
- Promote RAIAs representation and/or participation by architects on Commonwealth, State, Territory and local government heritage bodies
- Acknowledge and reward publicly the input of fellow professionals and contributing disciplines through joint awards

Principle 4

Identify, evaluate, interpret and manage culturally significant places

- Encourage thorough historical and diagnostic research into Australian architecture
- Facilitate publication of research material on Australian architecture
- Promote, encourage and support best practice with regard to the conservation of Australian architecture
- Participate in performance reviews of the various bodies and documents that determine or guide architectural practice and accreditation in cultural heritage conservation



Principle 5

Foster high standards of practice in cultural heritage conservation and adaptive re-use work

- Promote high standards of creativity and innovation
- Promote and support the application of sound conservation principles and methodology
- Promote and support the application of appropriate technology, and traditional construction and repair techniques, in design, documentation and execution
- Promote awareness of the danger to heritage conservation of applying inappropriate technology.

RAIA activities and initiatives

Following on from Principles 1-5, as previously listed in "What RAIA Members Need to do", the following RAIA initiatives and activities are set out in Principles 6 - 8

Principle 6

Encourage high standards in architectural education and development with respect to cultural heritage and conservation

- Support registers of heritage buildings and places, in particular the RAIA Register of Significant 20th+ Century Buildings, and all government registers.
- Participate in the continuing development and review of lists of significant heritage items in such registers, to ensure that they are appropriate and comprehensive in content and include the items on the RAIA lists.



- Ensure that appropriately qualified and skilled architects are available to undertake cultural heritage conservation work, through appropriate undergraduate and post-graduate courses and professional development programmes. Such persons should be registered architects knowledgeable in cultural heritage conservation, and with proven design skills and construction experience.
- Ensure that the conservation of cultural heritage remains part of the core curriculum in tertiary education programmes.
- Support research into the conservation of cultural heritage in the built environment.

Principle 7

Foster design innovations and solutions compatible with conservation principles

- Broaden the Conservation category of the RAIA Awards programs to specifically align conservation, with creative innovation, though not to the detriment of conservation principles
- Review and publish successful projects which involve conservation and adaptive re-use of significant buildings and new works in significant contexts and settings



Principle 8

Promote awareness of cultural heritage and conservation

- Promote the Conservation category of the RAIA Awards
- Establish, publish and archive a register of all architectural awards in Australia
- Disseminate relevant information from recognised heritage bodies in Australia and overseas, in particular from UNESCO, ICOMOS, Docomomo, the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the Association for Preservation Technology International (APTI)
- Encourage architects to contribute to archives of Australian architecture
- Require annual reporting of RAIA Heritage Committees activities nationally to facilitate an overview and co-ordination

Further Information and Links

The Burra Charter: Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999, as well as its illustrated version, the Illustrated Burra Charter, is an important resource. (available at <http://www.icomos.org/australia>)

RAIA Heritage Criteria for International, National and State/Territory listings

<http://www.uia-architectes.org/> (UIA 20th Century Architectural Heritage web site)

architecture.com.au/ (RAIA main web site and Chapter web sites)
www.icomos.org/australia (Australia ICOMOS web site)



www.heritage.gov.au (Australian Heritage Directory web site)

www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/index.html

(Australian Heritage Council web site)

<http://www.tams.act.gov.au/> (ACT Heritage web site)

<http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au> (NSW Heritage Office web site)

<http://www.heritage.vic.gov.au> (Heritage Victoria web site)

<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/histher> (Tas Parks and Wildlife Services web site)

www.dehaa.sa.gov.au/heritage/index (SA Environment and Heritage web site)

<http://www.heritage.wa.gov.au/> (WA Heritage Council web site)

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/heritage/index> (Northern Territory Heritage web site)

http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/cultural_heritage (Qld Cultural Heritage web site)

<http://www.docomomoaustralia.com.au/> (docomomo Australia web site)

<http://www.apti.org/> (Association for Preservation Technology International web site)

<http://www.hht.net.au/> (Historic Houses Trust of NSW web site)

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/> (National Trust of Australia)

The Federal Government and a number of the States and Territories as well as local government authorities offer some financial assistance to owners of heritage properties from time to time. Rate and land tax relief may also be available. Your State/Territory heritage agency should have the details.

Where to get assistance:

- your State or Territory heritage agency
- your RAI A State or Territory Chapter Heritage Committee