

An integrated approach to environment and heritage issues

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Links to data:

In the following text, there are hyperlinks to indicator documents which informed the particular statement or comment to which they are linked. It should be noted that, at different points in the commentary, different words might trigger links to the same indicator document. The links are context dependent.

Introduction

This cross-cutting commentary has been commissioned to assess whether Australia's heritage is being effectively managed in relation to other environmental management issues. The scope of the commentary has been defined through consultation with the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH).

Managing Australia's heritage effectively in relation to environmental management involves:

- recognising heritage values
- managing for those values
- building capacity
- monitoring and evaluation.

This short commentary explores some of the challenges in each of these areas, and looks at examples that indicate positive directions. It concludes with some observations about possible emerging ideas and challenges.

While this commentary explores this above topic broadly, it pays particular attention to the place of cultural heritage within environmental management. The primary focus is land-based, because the budget and timeframe did not allow a consideration of marine natural resource managements.

First this commentary looks at the recognition of heritage values. This means, for example, asking how effectively these values are incorporated into legislative and government systems, what tools there are to recognise changing values, and how well are diverse community perspectives acknowledged.

Next, the commentary looks at how those heritage values are managed to ensure they are conserved for present and future generations. This means, for example, creating ways of actively protecting these values and establishing an environment management system that help avoid impacts—intentional or unintentional—on heritage values. It also means capacity building in terms of knowledge, resources, skills and volunteers. Monitoring and evaluation have not been considered because they are the focus of the *Australian State of the Environment 2006 (SoE2006)* as a whole.

A scoping paper was developed by DEH to help brief the writer of this commentary. The scoping paper raised a number of issues and questions. In particular, it asked whether there are:

- implications for Australia’s heritage arising from environmental issues and processes
- direct threats to heritage when natural resource management programmes are implemented without considering heritage issues
- best practice examples where heritage values are well integrated into the planning and implementation of natural resource management programmes.

These topics are explored through the structure proposed above.

One issue appeared to underpin the scoping paper: ‘One suspects that there are two worlds proceeding independently of each other – notably the heritage world and the natural resource management world’. If this is so, what are the consequences? A conclusion reached here is that there is a closer alignment today than there has ever been before, but more is possible.

Recognising heritage values

To consider whether Australia’s heritage is being effectively managed in relation to other environmental management issues, an important starting point is to look at how ‘heritage’ is defined. This section starts by examining definitions used in Australian legislation and

practice, then looks at what we know about broader community perspectives, and finishes with emerging directions. It concludes that effective environmental management needs to be open and responsive to changing understandings of heritage if it is to effectively recognise and conserve heritage values.

Legislation and practice

Recognition of Australia's heritage at a national level started with the Hope Inquiry into the National Estate, which reported to the Parliament of Australia in 1974 (Yencken 1985). The *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* (AHC Act) created the Australian Heritage Commission and established the Register of the National Estate, defining the National Estate as:

those places, being components of the natural environment of Australia or the cultural environment of Australia, that have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations as well as for the present community. (AHC Act, s. 1)

Section 1A of the AHC Act further defined the criteria that needed to be met for a place to be considered part of the National Estate.

Commenting on this important period, David Yencken notes that the term 'national estate' gave formal expression to 'an emerging consciousness of our natural and man-made heritage' (Yencken 1985, p. 6). National estate combines the idea of 'inheritance' with that of national identity—these are the 'things we want to keep' and pass on to future generations. In the years since, governments around Australia have sought to define and protect heritage.

Heritage is far from being a fixed concept. Rather it is a cultural construct, mutable in its meanings, and often contested (Aplin 2002, p. 27). A challenge for governments has been recognising and responding to changing professional and community perceptions of the meaning of 'heritage'.

At a national level, s. 528 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) has introduced a definition of Australia's heritage as forming part of the environment (emphasis added below):

Environment includes:

- (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and
- (b) natural and physical resources; and
- (c) the qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas; and
- (d) heritage values of places; and
- (e) the social, economic and cultural aspects of a thing mentioned in paragraph (a), (b) or (c).

The EPBC Act (s. 528) further defines the 'heritage value' of a **place** as including the 'place's natural and cultural environment having aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance, or other significance, for current and future generations of Australians'. Indigenous heritage value is defined as the values of a place to Indigenous persons, rather than to 'Australians':

Indigenous heritage value of a place means a heritage value of the place that is of significance to indigenous persons in accordance with their practices, observances, customs, traditions, beliefs or history.

The Australian Natural Heritage Charter and the Burra Charter respectively (Australian Heritage Commission and Australian Committee for IUCN 2002; Australia ICOMOS 1999) are important guides to heritage practice in Australia. Neither defines ‘heritage’ specifically, but each uses the concept of ‘place’ and a definition of significance to guide an understanding of how to recognise, conserve and manage a place of cultural or natural significance.

The Burra Charter defines **place** as a ‘site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, spaces and views’ and defines **cultural significance** as meaning:

... aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. (Australia ICOMOS 1999, p. 2)

The Natural Heritage Charter defines a **place** as a ‘site or area with associated ecosystems, which are the sum of its geodiversity, biological diversity and natural processes’ and defines **natural significance** as meaning:

... the importance of ecosystems, biological diversity and geodiversity for their existence value, or for present or future generations in terms of their scientific, social, aesthetic and life-support value. (Australian Heritage Commission & Australian Committee for IUCN 2002)

The Australian Natural Heritage Charter also recognises that:

places may have both natural and cultural heritage values’ and that these ‘values may be related and sometimes difficult to separate. Some people, including many Indigenous people, do not see them as being separate. (Australian Heritage Commission and Australian Committee for IUCN 2002). While there is a considerable area of commonality across these definitions, suggesting shared understandings of ‘heritage values’, there are also some key differences. Three values are suggested in the charters that are not explicitly in the EPBC Act: spiritual value, existence value, and life support value.

Spiritual value is a relatively recent inclusion in the Burra Charter, dating from 1999. As yet Australia ICOMOS has not attempted to define this value further.

A brief survey of Commonwealth, state and territory heritage legislation for reference to ‘spiritual’ and ‘existence’ values found that the term ‘spiritual’ is used in s. 22 of the Commonwealth *Australian Heritage Council Act 2003* and s. 21 of the Commonwealth *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*.

In Queensland and the Northern Territory, legislation to protect Indigenous cultural heritage, the term ‘spiritual’ is not used. Spiritual values are not assessed by the government agency in making determinations for the heritage register. Instead, these values are determined and explained by the Indigenous people making the nomination. In New South Wales for example, the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* refers to ‘... traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history ...’(71D (1)).

While the term ‘spiritual’ is generally not used in legislation to protect Indigenous cultural heritage, other associated terms, such as sacred, secret, ceremonial, and beliefs, are used almost exclusively in association with Indigenous communities.

State and territory legislation to protect historic places generally includes spiritual as a component of social significance. For example, the heritage registers in Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, and New South Wales all use a version of the Commonwealth’s criterion (g), which refers to strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or **spiritual** reasons.

Life support value is not defined, and it is probably self-evident. In the Natural Heritage Charter it is expressed as a value for ‘present and future generations’.

Existence value is defined in the preamble to the Natural Heritage Charter as meaning that living **organisms, earth processes** and **ecosystems** may have value beyond the social, economic or cultural values held by humans (Australian Heritage Commission and Australian Committee for IUCN 2002, p. 3). The term ‘existence value’ (as defined in the Natural Heritage Charter) is not referred to specifically in any of the heritage legislation reviewed.

What do these definitions illustrate? Firstly, they are a simple demonstration of the differing perceptions of heritage values, and the potential for our understanding of heritage values to change over time. Secondly, the concept of existence value seems to give natural significance a paramount position over cultural significance. The challenge for environmental management practice is to recognise all heritage values, and to be attuned to changing perceptions of heritage values, especially in the community and amongst professionals.

Community perceptions

Community perceptions of heritage are poorly understood, and there are few data available to help us assess whether perceptions are changing. Experience in working in this field suggests, however, that they are changing.

The Australian community is unlikely, of course, to have a single view; more likely is a great diversity of perspectives.

Different people perceive and define heritage very differently, depending on their educational background, previous experiences, beliefs and philosophy of life. (Aplin 2002, p. 30)

Research into community interest in environmental issues tends to have a narrower focus than envisaged in the definition in the EPBC Act. For example, regular surveys from 2001 to 2003 examine the level of concern about environmental problems, environmental involvement and household environmental practices, but do not help us understand changes in community appreciation for heritage values (ABS 2001, 2002, 2003).

Research designed to test the concepts in the *Distinctively Australian* initiative (the new national heritage system) indicates that there is:

- a high level of support for heritage as a concept
- a strong view that some core areas of heritage - the processes of identifying, protecting and maintaining heritage places - are the preserve of experts and/or government
- a strong interest in connecting to and engaging with Australia's heritage, with an emphasis on feeling and experiencing, and especially through people's stories that can bring places and the past to life. (Colmar Brunton Social Research 2005)

Heritage was defined in the focus groups initially by participants, and then by the researchers as 'natural, Indigenous and historic places that are especially significant for all Australians and Australia' (Colmar Brunton 2005, p. 26). An unpublished investigation by Colmar Brunton Social Research (2004, and Lennon 2006) reveals that 54 per cent of Australians are interested in finding out more about Australian heritage. Interest in natural places, events and stories is highest amongst the general public in comparison with cultural and Indigenous places, events and stories.

The community heritage workshops held across Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales during the 1990s as part of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of national estate values for the regional forest agreements, indicate that those participating had a broad understanding of heritage that encompassed both natural and cultural significance.

For example, in community heritage workshops for the West Victoria Regional Forest Agreement, many places identified as 'heritage' by participants had multiple values: of places recognised for their cultural values, around 65 per cent (608 places) had social value, 63 per cent (592 places) had aesthetic value, and about 62 per cent (584 places) had historic value. Some 65 per cent of places were recognised for their natural value (612 places). Some values were recognised as existing across very large areas, rather than being limited to a specific place: examples included 'all old growth', 'all trees with hollows' (fauna habitat values), and 'all coastal streams' (Context 1999).

A more recent opportunity for communities in several states to identify heritage values and places was offered through the development of 'heritage icon' lists by National Trust organisations in South Australia and Queensland, by the New South Wales Heritage Office, and by the Western Australian Government and National Trust in that state. The Western Australian programme was the largest, generating more than 4700 nominations. The most strongly recognised were places such as the Swan River, Rottnest Island and Kings Park (Perth). But not all of the heritage icons were places: both in South Australia and Western Australia, events and people were also recognised, suggesting that heritage has wider meanings (National Trust of Australia websites).

Community consultation during 2004–05 as part of the development of the Victorian Government’s *Victoria’s Heritage 2010: strengthening our communities*. A draft strategy also indicated that heritage does not just mean the ‘heritage values of places’ (Heritage Council Victoria 2004, p.7).

Our heritage is more than just places; it is also the objects, collections, records, stories, the traditions and the special local characteristics that build community pride, create opportunities for cultural enrichment and attract visitors and tourists.

Emerging heritage values

From a cultural heritage perspective, there is currently strong interest in the following heritage values: recognising intangible heritage; gaining a better understanding of how Indigenous people value land and landscape; and involving communities in identifying strong and special associations with place. In understanding natural significance, developing ways to assess aesthetic significance remains an important challenge.

Intangible or living cultural heritage is relatively newly recognised internationally. The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003) defines intangible cultural heritage as the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003).

These aspects of intangible heritage may occur within particular places, and may be part of the heritage values of that place. The convention proposes that the process for recognising these values involve developing an inventory and policies. While a growing body of work now documents Indigenous intangible heritage, and current guidelines (Commonwealth of Australia 2004, p. 2) encourage its recognition in natural resource planning, only a limited amount of work has been done in Australia on traditions and practices of non-Indigenous peoples in relation to heritage values and place.

In south-eastern Australia, Indigenous peoples have been substantially displaced from their traditional country and important cultural ties have been severed. Nevertheless, cultural revival processes within communities is enabling many Indigenous people to reconnect with land and landscapes. Studies of heritage values are starting to recognise that, for Indigenous people in Tasmania and Victoria for example, elements of the pre-colonial landscape may be as important as specific sites that demonstrate Aboriginal occupation (C. Johnston, pers. comm.):

Indigenous people throughout Australia have links to the land and the sea that are historically, spiritually and culturally strong and unique. (Commonwealth of Australia 2004, p. 2)

Indigenous perspectives on land, environment and heritage often cross different government agencies. This offers opportunities for the development of a cross-agency or whole of government approach. In Victoria, for example, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Heritage Victoria (in DSE) and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria have

developed a *Strategy for Aboriginal Managed Lands in Victoria* with support from the state and Commonwealth governments to create a framework for Indigenous land and water management across Indigenous controlled lands (SAMLIV 2003).

Two of the heritage criteria used at a national level for many years suggest a need to involve communities in understanding the significance of the place: the aesthetic significance criterion refers to aesthetic characteristics ‘valued by a community or cultural group’ and the social significance criterion refers to special associations with a particular community or cultural group.

While there are numerous examples of projects that seek to identify the social significance of places, this heritage value is considered to be substantially under-assessed (C. Johnston, pers. comm.).

In understanding natural significance, developing ways to assess aesthetic significance remain an important challenge. Recent work on *Inspirational Landscapes* for the National Heritage list (Context 2003) is an example of the development of a more integrated approach, working across natural and cultural heritage values, including spiritual value.

A review of assessments of aesthetic significance in relation to mountainous places on the Register of the National Estate concluded:

However, although the evocations of the landscapes, including mountains, are realised and generally highly appreciated, those particular values have not been well represented in the majority of the mountain landscape listings in the Commonwealth Government’s, national heritage register, the Register of the National Estate (RNE). Approximately 544 mountains and ranges records are in the Register of the National Estate and of these 221 have included Aboriginal values, 80 of the records are for historic places (mostly mining sites and huts) while the aesthetic value of the places, when mentioned has, until recent years, been at best, only briefly noted as the place having ‘scenic quality’. (Johnston and Ramsay 2005)

Conclusions

Effective environmental management needs to be open and responsive to changing understandings of heritage values if it is to effectively recognise and conserve Australia’s heritage.

This is an ongoing challenge. There is a need to reconsider the scope of heritage legislation and policies at all levels of government when opportunities allow for review to ensure that the definitions of heritage value reflect current community values. It would be helpful to have more up-to-date information about community and professional views on heritage values, and this could be facilitated through regular surveys and professional exchanges. Development of integrated assessment methods for the National Heritage List could bring an effective spotlight to this issue, and help develop resources to guide practice throughout Australia.

The necessity for deliberate selection and definition of ‘heritage’, combined with the diversity of community perceptions as to ‘what is heritage’, means that the concept of ‘heritage’ is culturally constructed, commonly contested and therefore highly political (Aplin 2002, pp.

27–28). In contrast, many other components of the environment, for example air or water, are not subject to this process of selection, they just exist.

Managing heritage values

This commentary now looks at how those heritage values are managed to ensure they are conserved for present and future generations. This means creating ways of actively protecting these heritage values through environmental management, avoiding adverse impacts on these values, building community capacity and monitoring the results.

Protecting a heritage place involves first defining the place and its values, often entering the place onto a register or inventory to confirm its status as a ‘heritage place’, and then ensuring that its values are taken into account in planning for and decisions on actions that may impact on its values.

Many different mechanisms have been established, often through legislation, to enable this to happen. Broadly speaking, these mechanisms include:

- strategic plans and programmes for a region or locality (such as a catchment management plan; park management plan; or local land use plan) or for a natural resource (such as a catchment management plan; park management plan; or biodiversity action plan)
- impact assessment processes (such as environment impact assessment)
- statutory planning and development control instruments.

Other related approaches include performance standards, guidelines for development and impact minimisation, and advisory services. Public acquisition of places with high heritage values is also an option available to government.

Effectiveness in heritage protection depends on a combination of complex factors including legislation, including incentives and penalties, the condition and circumstances of the place, owner and manager good will, and resources.

Use of registers and lists

Although the division of heritage into **natural** and **cultural** is a largely artificial distinction, and likewise the further division of cultural heritage into **Indigenous** and **historic** heritage, these distinctions have been strongly embedded in Australian law and government structures for more than 30 years.

Government systems for the management of cultural heritage places (and values) are primarily based on the development of heritage lists and registers that define the nature and extent of the heritage values. Examples include the Australia Government’s Register of the National Estate and the new National Heritage List, and state and territory heritage registers.

Local government heritage schedules forming part of the planning and development control system are generally based on a similar type of list (see below).

Natural heritage values places are recognised through a substantial body of legislation, policy and planning processes. Some heritage registers specifically include places with natural heritage values, but not all do. Likewise, Indigenous heritage places may be protected through a register-based system, or through separate legislation and protective mechanisms.

Non-place cultural heritage (archives, records, objects, collections) and intangible heritage (folklife, traditions, language) are usually administered by another set of agencies such as state and territory museums, archives, and the arts. Objects may be included on some heritage registers if they are associated with a place; in Victoria and New South Wales, objects assessed as of state significance can be added to the heritage register in their own right.

The development of the EPBC Act offers the opportunity for a more integrated approach nationally, which could influence legislation and management systems in state and territory jurisdictions towards integrated, whole-of-government approaches.

As a method of identifying places with heritage values, heritage registers and lists have been relatively successful, although the processes are often time-consuming and require substantial resourcing. The scope of the places and values recognised reflects both the enabling legislation and heritage practice at the time. Heritage lists and registers are therefore a key tool in the management of heritage places and values, and because they appear to offer a definitive list of heritage places, they are easy to take account of in environmental management planning.

A significant disadvantage is that heritage registers will never be able to capture all heritage values and places. Problems include limitations in their scope and coverage:

The selection of individual places, in a register, is a device for identifying places we value. These are not the only places that the community or individuals may value. The list is always indicative, and limited by the means and criteria for selection. It does not cover the full range of places and features that people value – such as old signs.

The ‘dots on the map’ approach has problems, especially when it is applied to, say, Aboriginal sites. The division of heritage into Aboriginal, historic and natural is another issue. Another major goal for the heritage movement is to convey to the community an appreciation of history in the landscape. Heritage places can be used to explain this approach. (Walker 1997)

If environmental management planning processes rely on heritage registers, many places with heritage values will be overlooked. Studies can be conducted to identify heritage values, but this is not always possible. Natural heritage values such as biodiversity are seen as more central to environmental management planning, and are therefore more likely to be investigated and understood than are cultural heritage values.

National environment policies

As discussed above, although there is a stronger ‘integration’ model through the new national heritage system, heritage is still seen as ‘special’ places rather than as a value that may be found throughout the whole environment. This is particularly true for cultural heritage.

National environmental policy adopts a different approach, addressing broad segments of the environment—oceans, forests, ecologically sustainable development, biological diversity, water quality, and wetlands. Natural heritage values—the significance of ecosystems, biological diversity and geodiversity—are commonly valued wherever they occur. Such values form an integral part of environmental policy, at local, regional and national levels and often reflect international treaty obligations.

For example, biodiversity values including important species and other elements of biodiversity (habitat, ecological communities) are recognised as significant in Commonwealth and some state legislation. The foundation for biodiversity protection is provided by the *National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia’s Biological Diversity* (DEST 1996), drawn up in 1992 by all Australian governments, followed by Australia signing the UN *Convention on Biological Diversity* in 1993 with agreement by the Council of Australian Governments. Cultural heritage values do not have, as yet, an equivalent foundation document.

Regional natural resource planning

Regional plans have become a common approach to land, water and biodiversity planning in Australia, often based on natural system boundaries such as catchments. This approach is strongly supported through the natural resource management and Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) programmes of the Australian Government (Australian Government 2004a, 2004b). This section looks at several examples of regional plans designed to address broad catchment-wide environmental issues to see how heritage is addressed.

The Comprehensive Regional Assessments undertaken as part of the regional forest agreements is an early example of a cooperative approach to regional natural resource planning developed through partnerships between Commonwealth and state governments and based on the foundations of Australia’s 1992 National Forest Policy Statement (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2006).

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments have established a natural resource management programme to provide for the integrated implementation of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the NHT.

The NAP is designed to support the actions of communities and land managers across Australia, to manage salinity and improve water quality through integrated regional natural resource management plans and investment strategies. The NAP recognises the significant

impacts of dryland salinity on agricultural production, conservation of biodiversity and the viability of infrastructure. (National Resource Management Ministerial Council 2004, p. 22)

The NHT, through its policy objectives, themes and areas of activity now provides for three overarching objectives:

- **Biodiversity conservation**—the conservation of Australia’s biodiversity through the protection and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems and habitat for native plants and animals.
- **Sustainable use of natural resources**—the sustainable use and management of Australia’s land, water and marine resources to maintain and improve the productivity and profitability of resource based industries.
- **Community capacity building and institutional change**—support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities with skills, knowledge, information and institutional frameworks to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management.

Bilateral agreements have been signed between the Australian Government and each state and territory government, setting out the cooperative arrangements needed to deliver the NAP and NHT programmes, including the development of accredited, regional ‘integrated natural resource management plans’ across fifty-six regions around Australia.

Regional plans set out the means for identifying and achieving the region’s natural resource management targets. They are agreed by Government and the community and, together with investment strategies for implementing the plan, define the goals and contributions that all parties will undertake. Regional plans detail catchment-wide activities addressing a range of natural resource management issues including land and water management, biodiversity and agricultural practices.’

Regional plans should be: based on a ‘whole of region’ approach and address significant natural resource management issues incorporating environmental, social and economic aspects. (Australian Government 2004a)

Indigenous natural resource management facilitators are employed in each of the regions along with Indigenous land management facilitators at the state and territory level to facilitate the integration of Indigenous cultural values into the regional planning processes. Guidelines have also been prepared to facilitate Indigenous participation in regional plans and to ensure that cultural places and values are taken into account (Commonwealth of Australia 2004).

The accreditation process requires that plans meet defined criteria and address national objectives and outcomes. These include:

Protect and manage places and values of national environmental significance, including threatened species and communities, listed migratory species, Ramsar wetlands of international importance, world heritage areas and national heritage places

Promote Indigenous community participation in planning and delivery of Regional NRM outcomes. (Australian Government 2004a)

Given the primary purpose of these plans, it would be expected that **all heritage values** would be considered in relation to natural resource management issues and processes, and

that natural and Indigenous heritage values and places would be specifically recognised and protected.

Example: North Central Regional Catchment Strategy 2003–2007

The Victorian *North Central Regional Catchment Strategy 2003–2007* provides a ‘framework for the future landscape of the North Central region and the strategic direction for managing its natural resources’. The strategy links to a series of other plans that cover topics such as native vegetation, pest plants and animals, stressed rivers, water management and so on (North Central Catchment Management Authority 2003).

It describes natural resource management as being about how we, as a society, value, use and manage natural resources or assets. Natural resources provide ‘services’ to society and to ecosystems. The primary natural resource assets are water, land, biodiversity and climate, and the social assets are ‘human’, meaning community capacity, cultural heritage and infrastructure. Maintaining or enhancing assets and their values are described as ‘the drivers of the current generation of plans and strategies’ and this differs from the first generation of plans, which were based on problems or threats (North Central Catchment Management Authority 2003, p. 23).

The strategy recognises Indigenous heritage (including numerous sites and places of cultural and archaeological significance) and goldrush era heritage (including diggings, racelines, buildings and streetscapes from that era) as part of the unique features of the region.

Natural heritage values are strongly embedded in the strategy (for example, biodiversity is recognised as an asset and a value), but the term natural heritage is not used, suggesting that this concept and values are indivisible from natural resource management (especially compared to cultural values and places).

The long-term (50-year) goal for cultural heritage is that:

Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage will be valued by the community, protected and maintained.

The proposed cultural heritage actions focus on five main areas: strengthening the engagement of Indigenous communities in natural resource management; reducing impacts on cultural heritage that occur through altered water flow regimes, the development of land for recreation and impacts arising from salinity; and the establishment of management agreements for all significant cultural heritage sites where on-ground works are to be undertaken. Actions cover both the protection of cultural heritage values and protection for impacts arising from environmental issues and management practices. Nevertheless, the actions are quite generalised, making them harder to implement, and appear limited in scope.

Compared to cultural heritage values, biodiversity (a natural heritage value and a regional asset) is a strong component of the strategy, with clear goals and a substantial list of actions

around protecting and enhancing significant native vegetation communities and reducing impacts.

Biodiversity is also recognised as being ‘part of the region’s cultural heritage from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives’ with a focus on scarred trees and past food harvesting practices. Visual and recreational values are also recognised, primarily as valued uses rather than as ‘non-material values’.

As an example, this strategy includes natural and cultural heritage, but does not demonstrate a fully integrated approach. Indigenous perspectives appear to have strongly influenced and broadened the scope of natural resource planning and management. Areas that could be strengthened include:

- recognising the cultural importance of other ‘environmental services’ (for example, biodiversity)
- recognising natural heritage values explicitly to ensure that all aspects are covered in the plan (for example, geodiversity)
- taking a broader approach to cultural heritage assets (for example, by recognising broader cultural landscapes; by developing predictive models to help recognise the likelihood of unrecorded cultural heritage assets occurring within particular areas; and by recognising intangible heritage (such as customs and practices))
- recognising that ‘conflicting values’ may exist, for example ‘pest plants’ may also be cultural heritage assets, and that solutions are needed that recognise all values
- adopting standard terminology using the Natural Heritage and Burra charters to ensure clarity of meaning (for example, replacing ‘protected and maintained’ with ‘conserved’).

Example: The Swan Region Strategy for Natural Resource Management (December 2004)

The Swan Region Strategy for Natural Resource Management (Swan Catchment Council 2004) covers a large area containing and surrounding the City of Perth, Western Australia. The strategy strongly responds to the ‘sense of place and a linkage to the land’ of the Nyoongar, the traditional owners of this area of country. Their role as managers of the natural resources of the region thousands of years is acknowledged, and European settlement is recognised as the root cause of most of the environmental issues addressed by the strategy. This appears to offer a strong foundation for the strategy, and it is reflected throughout the document, from the opening pages where the creation of the land is told by Nyoongar elder Noel Nannup.

The strategy proposes a series of seven aspirational goals, one of which frames cultural heritage within natural resource management:

Protect, enhance and incorporate cultural heritage values within the Region to achieve sustainable natural resource management outcome. (Swan Catchment Council 2004, p. 5)

The section of the strategy on cultural heritage (section 3.7) recognises the complex environmental, economic and social benefits of cultural heritage. For Indigenous people, cultural heritage is not seen as isolated from natural heritage. For example, the cultural heritage section of the strategy recognises:

Areas of significance within Nyoongar culture include: land formations, rivers, wetlands, estuaries, freshwater pools, Aboriginal sites, biodiversity, air, water, communities, walk trails, traditional knowledge. (Swan Catchment Council 2004, p. 137)

The strategy identifies that relatively little is known about the ‘current state of Indigenous cultural heritage in relation to natural resource management’ and sets out management targets to better define this relationship (Swan Catchment Council 2004, p. 139).

For non-Indigenous people, cultural heritage is considered to primarily focus on historic places, recognising ‘sense of place’ and the broader landscape as contributing elements.

The strategy appears to offer a new model through its foundation on an integrated Indigenous perspective on land and heritage. It is more ‘traditional’ in its approach to non-Indigenous heritage.

The resultant strategy, expressed as ‘regional priorities’, seeks a substantial increase in community participation and education across almost all natural resource management actions, indicating that the new perspectives in the strategy will be widely shared. The cultural heritage targets are quite specific, with two important proposals: firstly, a substantial (75 per cent) increase in number of local and state government agencies involved in natural resource management incorporating Indigenous cultural heritage into their processes, and secondly, establishing partnerships to further incorporate natural resource management principles into heritage protection by 2008 (Swan Catchment Council 2004, p. 186).

Examples of past regional plans

A review of older catchment and natural resource management plans reveals a considerable shift in thinking over the last ten to 15 years, moving from a narrow definition of natural resources towards a values-based and more integrated approach, particularly in the last two to three years. Some examples that illustrate these changes are discussed briefly below; but the scope of this commentary paper does not allow full exploration of the purposes, objectives of the plans, nor the responsibilities of the initiating agencies.

For example, the *Wimmera Catchment Salinity Management Plan* (Wimmera Catchment Coordinating Group 1992) recognises ‘conservation, recreation and tourism’ but primarily in relation to natural vegetation values and associated outdoor recreation. Indigenous values associated with wetlands and streams, for example, are not mentioned. Impacts on buildings and structures are mentioned but only generally, with no reference to cultural heritage values. Significant vegetation communities are seen as potentially severely impacted, but the idea of cultural landscape values is not addressed. Nor does the action plan propose to involve Indigenous communities. The pre-1993 *Guidelines for Land and Water Management Plans*

(Murray and Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Committee n.d) for New South Wales was designed to guide communities in the creation of a plan. Cultural heritage resources have limited recognition. *Time for Action* (Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust 1996), a plan about vegetation conservation within the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment, recognises native vegetation as primarily being of environmental value while noting that its protection would enhance ‘heritage values’. The action plan is ahead of its time in recognising the importance of ‘scenic and landform features’ and ‘historical significance and other social aspects’ in the evaluation of conservation priorities within the catchment, and recognises the need to consult with Indigenous groups, the National Trust and historical societies to ensure cultural heritage items are protected within vegetation management plans.

By 2000, the New South Wales *Native Vegetation Conservation Strategy* (Native Vegetation Advisory Council NSW 2000, pp. 11–12) for example, recognised the ecological, social, economic and Indigenous cultural values of native vegetation. Social and cultural values are broadly defined, and recognised as dynamic and diverse. These values are about how we see and interact with ‘the land and its living things’, and include recognition of places of scenic beauty and maintenance of distinctive Australian landscapes. Indigenous cultural values include spiritual connections, with ‘uncleared landscapes’ recognised as providing ‘a direct link to the traditional Indigenous landscape’.

The Victorian approach to native vegetation management plans, published in the same year, does not recognise cultural values (Corangamite Catchment Management Authority 2000). These plans focus on the reversal of the long-term decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation, focusing on ecological processes and biodiversity values. While economic values are recognised in the guiding principles, the non-material values such as local identity and cultural landscapes are not.

Role of local government

Local government plays an important role in the recognition and protection of heritage values and places, and in local environmental management. There are a variety of ways in which local government can act including: statutory controls, advice and incentives, direct land and property management, community development, environmental education.

Planning schemes are a common method of protecting places of local heritage significance in many states of Australia. In Victoria, for example, it is estimated that more than 100 000 cultural heritage places (primarily historic) are protected through local planning schemes, compared to around 2000 on the state government register (Heritage Victoria 2005).

Many local government authorities have developed local strategies or plans addressing environmental and sustainability issues that are important in their locality—local conservation strategies, Agenda 21 plans, environment strategies, with the different names reflecting different periods and the influence of government policy. Usually these adopt a ‘whole-of-

local-government' approach, addressing issues and seeking solutions through a single vision statement that is combined with integrated policies and programmes.

Some of these 'environment' plans address heritage explicitly. One recent example from Victoria, the *Nillumbik Environment Strategy* (Nillumbik Shire Council 2001) is based on the council's vision for the shire, which includes a 'protected and preserved natural, built and historical environment'. As might be expected, biodiversity protection is addressed in relation to ecosystem benefits but it is not linked to cultural values (contribution to local identity for example). Water and land are treated in a similar way. Natural and cultural heritage is addressed in a separate theme that focuses on heritage places, and recognises landscapes as important heritage assets. There is a connection to arts and culture. Overall, the actions around environment are more substantial than those around heritage, and natural heritage is largely subsumed into the environment; but the end result appears to offer a good basis for achieving good heritage outcomes through a local environment plan.

Local government heritage strategies appear to be less common than environment strategies. In Victoria, most local government heritage strategies are based on historic place protection and focus on statutory planning and associated advice and incentives schemes. An exception is the Maribyrnong City Council's heritage plan (Maribyrnong City Council 2001), which offers a 'whole-of-council' set of recommendations for protecting natural and cultural heritage places. Some actions also involve outside organisations, including state and Commonwealth government agencies and community groups.

At a national level, Australian local government authorities come together through the National General Assembly of Local Government (convened by the Australian Local Government Association—ALGA) to develop and express a united voice on issues concerning their communities. Resolutions of these assemblies help inform ALGA and state and territory local government associations when developing national priorities and policies on behalf of local government (National General Assembly of Local Government 2004).

The current national agenda for local government has a strong global environmental focus, seeking to address 'global environmental problems, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the protection of biodiversity, the preservation of wilderness, and the prevention of further depletion of the ozone layer' (National General Assembly of Local Government 2004).

The natural environment agenda is based on the 'principles of catchment management, sustainability, land conservation and natural resource management' and the cultural heritage agenda focuses on 'programmes to conserve and manage features of social, cultural, architectural, historic and Aboriginal significance'.

As seems common at other levels of government, 'environment' appears to be a strong integrating concept on the national local government agenda, whereas 'heritage' is narrowly defined as cultural heritage (National General Assembly of Local Government 2004).

Recognising the cultural values of natural heritage places

Reservation of land to protect natural heritage values also protects Indigenous values associated with peoples' connections to land, plants and animals and to traditional areas (including spiritual values). It could also help protect Indigenous sites that relate to traditional use of that land by reducing impacts. Increasingly, Indigenous people's rights to continue traditional practices such as hunting, gathering of plants, and access for ceremony are being recognised in management planning for such areas, and in many cases, there is transfer of ownership and co-management agreements. As well, employment of Indigenous people in management roles is increasing their opportunities to contribute their knowledge on the best ways to care for that land, as well as continuing their connection with that land.

The Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management has developed a draft policy on Indigenous involvement in nature conservation and land management that (amongst other things) commits to consultation of proposed new reserves, recognises Aboriginal intellectual property rights, provides for shared management, and supports the rights of access and land use by native title-holders to practise traditional laws and customs (CALM 2001). A subsequent discussion paper seeks comment on the objective of meeting IUCN best practice guidelines in relation to the involvement of Indigenous people in protected area management (CALM 2003).

The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has been working with Indigenous communities to develop 'approaches to land management that recognise the cultural values of biodiversity and of the environment'. Specific projects have included 'development of joint management of national parks (for example, Mutawintji National Park), Indigenous involvement in biodiversity surveys, and research and the mapping of people's attachment to landscapes using oral history and participatory planning techniques.' (Department of Environment and Conservation 2004)

Far fewer opportunities are offered to non-Indigenous people who have long associations with places and landscapes. It is only in recent years that the importance of these associations have started to be recognised, often through the assessment of social significance—defined 'as strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons' (Register of the National Estate, criterion G).

Reservation of public land to protect its natural heritage values often restricts traditional uses that may have been practiced for generations: such as hunting, grazing of stock, or riding horses. While these uses are now known to be damaging to natural heritage values, the long association between people (often specific families) and these areas may have resulted in development of cultural heritage values. New approaches to this issue are starting to emerge.

In Tasmania, for example, investigations of traditional practices have documented elements of the traditional and continuing relationship between five local communities and their

environment (Knowles 1997). This has helped focus discussion about the continuation of use and access arrangements in areas such as the upper Mersey valley, an area largely within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area that represents deep affection, a sense of place, and a sense of history for local communities (Russell and Johnston 2005).

Rather than setting natural and cultural heritage values in opposition to each other, the 1999 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area management plan prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service breaks new ground, recognising that:

cultural values were to be understood not only in terms of fabric associated with historic events, but with practices expressive of attachments to places that communities were committed to maintaining. (Russell and Jambrecina 2002, cited in Russell and Johnston 2005)

Sense of place

Local 'sense of place', is a more diffuse quality that is harder to define. Lippard (1997, p.7) describes it as:

Inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar ... our own "local" – entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks in the land that provoke and evoke.

For Lippard, heritage is not just simply places or parts of the environment. Instead it is about relationships between people and their environment, and about culture and experience.

For example, a current urban planning issue in many Australian cities is the impact of new development on neighbourhood character. Neighbourhood character is being recognised through studies as a value to be protected:

Neighbourhood character has emerged as a significant planning issue over the last 10 years in response to the impact of newer, more intensive development in traditional suburban streets. Neighbourhood character studies have been used to identify areas or features of neighbourhood character in a municipality (City of Stonnington 2005).

In rural areas, the impacts on local landscapes from new land uses such as wind farms and plantations are causing concern to some communities.

In both cases, these urban and rural landscapes are seen as having a value to present and future communities, not as 'heritage places' *per se* but as a part of people's locality and identity. Managing an environment that is so resonant with meaning is indeed a challenge, requiring respect for diverse and often unarticulated values.

It would help to recognise that cultural heritage values may be present throughout whole landscapes in the same way as (for example) biodiversity values. The *State of the Environment Tasmania 2003* defines cultural landscapes as:

Cultural landscapes are an aggregation of places, features, objects, archival material, memories and perceptions of social and contemporary significance. The World Heritage Convention defines cultural landscapes as the 'combined works of nature and of man', demonstrating the evolution of human society in conjunction with environmental constraints and opportunities and illustrating successive social, economic, and cultural forces.

The whole of Tasmania can be considered a cultural landscape produced by Aborigines. European settlers imposed their cultural landscapes upon this Aboriginal environment. (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2005)

In this interesting definition, cultural landscapes do not stand apart from nature. Rather they are a way of seeing the environment, recognising and valuing the layers.

Urban settlement and environmental management

Urban planning recognises environmental issues such as energy and water conservation and management being current priorities, along with air quality and health, conversion of non-urban land for city expansion, waste and recycling and pollution.

Increasing density

A significant policy response to energy and greenhouse issues has been to propose ‘urban consolidation’ by increasing the density of the population in urban areas well served with public transport, employment opportunities and infrastructure.

These areas are usually close to the centre of neighbourhoods and communities—locations that often contain significant heritage places and qualities that are highly valued by local communities as part of their identity. The rise of community groups to protect their local area and the continuing involvement of National Trust organisations in defending the heritage values of suburban areas has demonstrated the strength of community feeling.

No monitoring of the actual impact on increasing dwelling density on heritage values has been specifically undertaken nationally, although a condition survey of historic places has identified that there are some pressures on prominent buildings in cities and regional centres associated with redevelopment and increasing land values (Pearson and Marshall 2005).

On the other hand, increasing the density of the inner areas of cities and town is also designed to reduce its expansion into the surrounding landscape where such development could impact on environmental and natural heritage values (such as water quality or biodiversity) and on cultural heritage values (such as Indigenous sites, historic rural settlements and landscapes) Lennon reports that Indigenous groups have identified that ‘housing estates, logging, quarries, wind farms and marinas being constructed on culturally significant sites’ is a major issue in the protection of sites (Lennon 2006).

Internal migration in Australia

Coastal regions and some ‘bush’ towns have experienced dramatic growth over the last ten years, and this trend appears to be continuing. While it is not the result of a deliberate environmental policy, the intensification of growth in these areas is certain to be impacting on environmental and heritage values. The impacts are likely to be both positive and negative, and could range from an increasing reuse of historic buildings through to native vegetation

clearing for new development. Government policy groups have recently been established to address the impacts of the 'sea change' phenomena.

The areas that are losing population will be suffering at least a loss of local community knowledge, but many smaller rural settlements are likely to experience loss of local community services, closure of community buildings, and a threat to a community's sense of identity and cohesiveness.

Climate change

Concern about climate change (the greenhouse effect) is an important driver of government policy to increase urban densities in developed areas, manage travel demand and seek mode shifts, improve building siting and design, along with retrofitting of existing buildings. Likewise water conservation is influencing new subdivision and building design.

Climate change is regarded the major environmental issue that will affect terrestrial and marine natural heritage.

Energy from renewable sources is a positive environmental initiative but may also impact on broader landscapes. A recent example is the development of wind farms, which has been recognised as impacting on valued rural landscapes, on biodiversity values, on Indigenous sites and spiritual values, and on contemporary cultural values and sense of place.

In response, an issues paper has been prepared by the Australian Wind Energy Association and Australian Council of National Trusts. It proposes a values-based method for assessing landscapes, emphasising the importance of understand the values of communities and stakeholders in each locality. If applied, this may provide a useful tool towards recognition of extensive rather than site-based heritage values (AWEA and ACNT 2005).

Building capacity

Effective recognition and management of heritage values in environmental management requires capacity building.

Knowledge

Interdisciplinary skills are an essential complement to specialist knowledge to ensure heritage values are effectively considered in environmental management.

There is no information available to indicate whether the breadth of skills has increased within Commonwealth agencies in response to the new requirements of the EPBC Act. Generally speaking, staff numbers appear to have remained the same between 2001 and 2005. Within state and territory governments, the number of skilled staff in each of the three heritage areas—Indigenous, historic and natural—is largely unknown and there is no information as to the breadth of skills.

Membership of professional cultural heritage associations also appears to have remained relatively static (Lennon 2006). There are many professional organisations for cultural and natural heritage practitioners (for example, cultural—Australia ICOMOS; Australian Archaeological Association, Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, Australian Council Professional Historians Association; natural—the Ecological Consultants Association, Association of Marine Biology, Ecological Society of Australia) as well as specific interest groups (for example, Australasian Bat Society, the Australian Mammal Society, Society of Architectural Historians of Australian and New Zealand). As yet there is no professional association established specifically to facilitate exchange between natural and cultural heritage practitioners.

The Australian Council of Building Design Professions is an example of a professional ‘umbrella’ organisation that has been set up by seven existing professional associations with the aim of achieving better practices, policies, legislation and regulation for the design of the built environment for people in the constituent professions of architecture, engineering, quantity surveying, landscape architecture and planning (Australian Council of Building Design Professions (BDP) 2005).

The national organisation for environmental practitioners in Australia is the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand and it has not formed any specialist groups; it is organised as Chapters (Australia and New Zealand) and Divisions (states and territories). Recently, a Certified Environmental Practitioner (CEnvP) certification scheme has been established, and areas of practice that might be included for practitioners could include heritage management.

Some professional organisations have established special interest ‘environment’ and ‘heritage’ groups: for example, the Institution of Engineers has established an Environmental College and a group covering engineering heritage (Engineering Heritage Australia).

Training

There are many opportunities for tertiary training in cultural heritage and environmental management, with a search of the revealing 22 courses in cultural heritage and 43 in environmental management; in addition there are many more courses in the specialities within each of these two broad disciplines. There are also 18 courses in Indigenous studies, most covering community, health and development, with only a few focused on culture and heritage (Hobsons Guides Website).

The 1970s saw the growth of multidisciplinary, postgraduate environmental courses, integrating many previously unlinked discipline areas. These courses were created in response to intense interest and concern about the global environment and recognition of the multiple impacts of many human activities. Today, a wide range of environment courses are available at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and in all States and Territories. Cross-disciplinary

cultural heritage courses have developed more recently, primarily since the 1980s. There are no courses in South Australia, Tasmania or the Northern Territory.

Examples of courses that cover both natural and cultural heritage within an environmental management framework appear to be rare, and it would be informative to research the training background of today's environmental managers. One long-standing example is the Parks, Recreation and Heritage course (at graduate certificate, graduate diploma and masters level) at Charles Sturt University, which offers an in-depth understanding of both natural and cultural resource management.

Two other environmental management courses that include cultural heritage are, for example:

- Bachelor of Science – Natural Environment and Wilderness Management (University of Tasmania) is a multi-disciplinary programme that provides practical and scientific skills for planning, managing and monitoring environmental resources in wilderness and other natural areas.
- Bachelor of Social Science (Environment) at RMIT includes Indigenous studies in a course that focuses on environmental management.

Another example is the Conservation and Land Management Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses that are based on a National Training Package designed for those employed or seeking employment in practical environmental management. The main emphasis is on the assessment of practical skills with industry tasks and field projects. There is no cultural heritage equivalent, and cultural heritage is notably absent from this programme.

Volunteers

Many people participate as volunteers to support their local community and environment, through membership of organisations and through hands-on work.

Opportunities to care for a local environment occur primarily through Landcare and Friends groups. These volunteer organisations have been well supported by Landcare and Natural Heritage Trust funding programmes over many years, and most localities appear to have one or more groups with a hands-on environmental care focus.

Cultural heritage opportunities appear to be more limited, although many historic places also have Friends groups. Hands on Heritage offers opportunities to participate in conserving historic places. Conservation Volunteers Australia, a sponsor of Hands on Heritage with Heritage Victoria, primarily offers volunteer programmes focused on the environment, with more than 2000 projects available Australia-wide. The Conservation Volunteers Australia website offers an effective search tool called 'Conservation Connect', which enables potential volunteers to search for opportunities across Australia. Hands on Heritage is not accessible

through this searching function (Heritage Victoria 2005; Conservation Volunteers Australia website).

Conclusions

The lack of cross-disciplinary courses suggests that the areas of natural and cultural heritage will continue to remain distinct specialisations, limiting opportunities for developing dialogue, shared methodologies and broadening career choices. People trained in environmental management need multidisciplinary skills and approaches, and a broad understanding of both cultural and natural heritage. A skills audit may reveal more specific training needs.

Opportunities for volunteer participation in cultural heritage are more limited than in environmental management, and the tools available to enable volunteers to find suitable opportunities are undeveloped compared with those available in the environment sector.

Looking forward

This section offers some ideas and directions arising from the observations made and conclusions drawn throughout this commentary.

Heritage and environment are still distinct elements in government legislation, structures and policies. This arises from the past. Looking forward, natural resource management policies and plans are increasingly aware of and responsive to cultural heritage values. Natural heritage values, especially biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, are strongly embedded in such plans.

The term natural heritage is often not used in these plans, but the naming of the Natural Heritage Trust indicates its importance and helps explain why the natural heritage values referred to in the Australian Natural Heritage Charter 2002 are largely captured by and absorbed into natural resource and environmental management policies. This appears to be a great strength.

Cultural heritage is now included in regional natural resource management plans, but this is a recent change, and might not yet be consistently applied. The natural resource management and NHT regional plan frameworks could be enhanced by guidelines and best practice examples on how to consider cultural heritage values and places.

Increasingly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the environment are being recognised and are helping to bridge the boundaries between government agencies and policies. Natural resource management plans often acknowledge that, traditionally, Indigenous people had a worldview that did not separate humans and nature. While some might argue that Western thinking has modified this worldview, there is a strong resurgence

of this worldview even in areas and amongst Indigenous communities that were severely impacted by colonisation.

The Australian Natural Heritage Charter and the Burra Charter together provide effective guides to recognising heritage values and places. Natural resource management plans often use different terminology, whereas reference back to these charters would create greater national consistency and clarity in the plans.

Within government policy, heritage continues to be primarily defined as special places. Community responses to some issues—such as impacts on valued rural landscapes, on urban streetscapes and neighbourhoods, and on community associations with places—suggests that a broader approach to heritage by government is desired. At a community level, ‘heritage’ is a far more than places and encompasses a wide range of values and associations: heritage is as likely to be an event, a tradition, a product, or a story.

Environmental management planning could benefit from recognising other ways in which people connect to place and environment. Much environmental policy is based on an expressed commitment to ‘care for the environment’ whereas cultural heritage policy has begun to recognise the importance of attachment to place, of meanings and associations, and the links to cultural, community and personal identity. The importance of natural heritage as part of local and personal identity, for example, would be a worthwhile area for exploration in natural resource management planning.

The Australian Government’s EPBC Act and new national heritage system has the potential to present a more integrated view of ‘heritage’ as a set of values that form an integral part of the environment. Some natural resource management plans have started to address aspects of intangible heritage—such as customs, traditions and connection to land—primarily in relation to Indigenous peoples. This initiative should be encouraged and expanded to non-Indigenous peoples.

The natural resource management approach to broad-scale regional analysis of the landscape could be more widely adopted for cultural heritage analysis. As well as assisting in closer integration of cultural heritage values into natural resource management planning, it would also reduce the risks associated with defining cultural heritage values as only occurring within cultural heritage places.

Likewise ‘caring for country’ is now a familiar phrase in relation to Indigenous people and communities. The concept reflects the strong and intimate connection between Indigenous people and the landscape, recognising that this connection is not simply material or utilitarian. While it is important to recognise that non-Indigenous Australians do not have the same culture, traditions and spirituality as Indigenous Australians, it is equally important to acknowledge that land, landscape, environment are important to many people in non-material ways: these include a strong sense of connection to particular places and landscapes; a spiritual sense of place; and personal and community identity.

Finding ways to engage people fully in caring for our environment—because it supports all life, because it is valuable in its own right, because it helps meet our needs and because it is part of who we are and what we love—offers an opportunity to natural resource management planning that it appears ready to take on.

Managing for all values means finding ways to recognise and understand them. Conflicts between values will become more apparent, enabling better solutions to be developed. Natural resource management planning processes can provide a forum for such discussions, potentially leading to outcomes that are well-supported and that recognise the complexity of community values. This is especially important at the local level, where community support and effort is needed to implement government policy, and where conflict over values can have significant impacts on community cohesiveness.

While specialisation and technical expertise is increasingly important to understand the environment and its values, so is interdisciplinary communication to enable conflicting values and complex issues to be fully considered and resolved. Employment, training and volunteer work opportunities can help participants build these valuable multidisciplinary skills.

Finally, whole-of-government policies, strategies and plans reflect a new approach, seeking to integrate all government policy and actions while also recognising the need for specialist agencies with particular functions. Natural resource management planning seeks to create an integrated vision, priorities and actions across governments and communities and is a powerful tool. Increasing the recognition of cultural heritage values within natural resource management will strengthen Australia's ability to protect natural and cultural heritage values and places for the future.

Glossary of terms

In this commentary paper the following terms are used in:

Cultural heritage place: this term is shorthand for a place of cultural significance.

Natural heritage place: this term is shorthand for a place of natural significance.

Place: The definitions of place used in the Burra Charter and Natural Heritage Charter apply.

Heritage value or values: in this commentary, heritage value or values means the identified values of a place based on the application of stated criteria that are designed to assess its cultural or natural significance. For example, the criteria for the National Heritage List are used to assess the values of the place. The assessed values are then stated in a relation to each relevant criterion.

Heritage place: in this commentary paper 'heritage place' is shorthand for a place with defined heritage values.

Heritage register: refers to statutory and non-statutory lists and inventories of places with heritage values. Generally a 'register' contains places that have been assessed against specific criteria and thresholds, whereas 'lists' and 'inventories' may be more inclusive and less selective.

Other definitions are contained in the body of the paper and are derived from legislation.

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