

ESSAY: 'ONLY CONNECT' – THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE¹

Kate Clark

Kate Clark FSA FRGS, MIFA, IHBC. is the Director of the Historic Houses Trust in New South Wales. Kate grew up in Australia but spent 25 years in the UK where she worked with the Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust, the Council for British Archaeology and English Heritage before joining the Heritage Lottery Fund as Deputy Director of Policy and Research, dealing with conservation policy and also research into the economic and social benefits of heritage.

Kate has also run a consultancy specialising in heritage policy, practice and planning where clients included the States of Jersey, Sir John Soane's Museum and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. She has written books and articles on industrial archaeology, conservation, heritage management, sustainable development and the wider value of heritage, including Capturing the Public Value of Heritage. Kate has also done workshops and taught in the UK as well as in Ireland, South Africa, Slovenia, Canada and the United States.

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, a group of black teenagers, some people chosen at random from a Welsh electoral roll, a leading Australian economist as well as sociologists, policy boffins, park managers and local councillors, all shared a conference platform with three government ministers to talk about why heritage was important. At first sight this might not seem remarkable – but in fact it was a rare public political endorsement of the value of cultural heritage.

Whether it is because heritage is often associated with planning controversies, or because so many people see heritage is something elitist, 'heritage-bashing' is a common sport both in Australia and elsewhere. It is seen as a barrier to progress, an impediment to the planning system, and an unfair burden on individuals. Inconvenient historic suburbs suddenly become 'slums' and historic buildings as 'carbon villains'. The head of planning in one Australian state proudly described our heritage as 'nothing but a fart in the desert', whilst the Mayor of London accused English Heritage of doing more damage than the Luftwaffe.²

It is not just rhetorical destruction – Australian journalist Rob Bevan describes the way in which the destruction of buildings and places of worship is part of the 'ethnic cleansing' that accompanies war, and that by removing physical traces of community the victors remove memories and establishes control.

But if politicians do not always like heritage, people do. Ninety per cent of Australians have visited a heritage site and some 95% had engaged in at least one heritage related activity in the past year. About a third of Australians visit museums each year – more than attend live sporting events.

¹ This essay focuses mainly on material cultural heritage, drawing on impact studies from UK and elsewhere that might be relevant to Australia. I acknowledge that Aboriginal Australians do not distinguish cultural and natural heritage and I am aware that this essay does not deal adequately with Aboriginal heritage. Nor has it been possible to address problems with the protection of historic sites in the planning system. Note that the views in this essay are my own and not those of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW or its Trustees.

² Livingstone had forgotten that the first major legislation to protect historic buildings in England emerged in response to the destruction of World War Two. Strong heritage protection often emerges in responses to major losses – in Australia for example following the protests and losses of the 1970s.

Australians are very clear about the role of heritage in identity, and in the educational benefits of heritage and history for their children. They want to know more about their own heritage and that of others, and at the same time feel strongly that too little is done to protect heritage, and many of them are willing to pay considerably more than current spending levels, to improve that situation³.

The challenge for a heritage strategy is how best to bridge this divide between the high degree of importance that individuals and communities place on cultural heritage and the relatively low political profile – and with it a relatively low level of support – that cultural heritage has.

Cultural heritage also falls into the gaps between arts, culture, planning and the environment, which means that in policy terms it is often invisible.⁴

Yet there is a growing research base that demonstrates that caring for places that matter and taking part in cultural heritage activities can generate significant environmental, economic and social benefits. Benefits mean that heritage can contribute to wider agendas such as health outcomes, education, the environment and urban planning. But the connection between heritage and these bigger issues is rarely if ever made because that evidence is scattered across a wide range of academic disciplines.

This essay provides some examples of the kinds of evidence that is beginning to emerge about the wider benefits of heritage, as a starting point for better articulating the role that heritage can play in modern society and making heritage more visible.⁵ It then touches on some of the barriers to better recognising the role of cultural heritage.

HERITAGE COUNTS – THE SCALE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AUSTRALIA

For the purposes of this essay, cultural heritage comprises things that we value, have inherited and want to hand on to the future – everything from oral tradition, memory and language, to collections, archives, places, buildings and landscapes. They are the things that we enjoy and learn about by visiting museums, archives, historic sites and parks, and which give identity and distinctiveness to the towns, cities or rural areas where we live.

Cultural heritage is both something that we protect and manage (through the land use planning system, the system of national parks and other reserves and the care of collections and archives) and also something that we participate in and enjoy (through books and other media, through museum exhibitions and programs, as volunteers or as members of local history societies or special interest groups such as rail enthusiasts, through genealogy and personal research, or through other activities). Only a tiny fraction of historic places are museums – the vast majority of historic buildings are places where people live, work and enjoy themselves on a daily basis.

Cultural heritage data is pulled together in the State of the Environment reports, through various Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publications, through initiatives by the Heritage Chairs and

³ Allen Consulting Group 2005.

⁴ This is perfectly illustrated in the current discussion document for Australia's national cultural strategy which, despite mentioning cultural heritage, sets draft policies only for the arts (National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper, 2011). Note that such policy nuances are not just academic – celebrating culture does not necessarily mean protecting cultural heritage. In 2008 Liverpool in England was trumpeted as a European 'Capital of Culture' at the same time that heritage campaigners claimed that it was about to become 'European Capital of Dereliction' because so much of its Georgian building stock and landmark churches were at risk.

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Living+on+the+eve+of+destruction%3B+Liverpool's+Georgian+heritage+is...-a0173977624>

⁵ As well as the issues raised here Balderstone 2004 also provides a useful overview for Australia.

Officials of Australia and New Zealand (HCOANZ) and to a varying degree through State environmental reporting.⁶

Using HCOANZ data, our protected **heritage assets** include the 19 World Heritage Sites, 93 sites on the National Heritage list, 338 Commonwealth heritage listed places and 15,235 state and territory listed places. There is no comprehensive data on local heritage places – although in Victoria alone there are more than 150,000 local heritage places.

At the end of June 2008 there were 1,184 museum/gallery organisations, operating from 1,456 locations across Australia which:

- employed 7,856 people
- generated income of \$998.4m during the 2007-08 financial year
- incurred expenses of \$860.1m for the same period
- had admissions of 30.7m people for the same period
- held 52.5m objects in their collections.⁷

There are around 548 public library and archive organisations. The 8.1m records created by 9,000 government agencies in the National Archives are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of national, state and local historical records, let alone film and sound archives, and family records.

The Collections Council of Australia has estimated that around 73 million people visited museums, libraries and galleries in Australia in 2005-06.⁸

A lot of heritage is held by private individuals or community organisations. For example, there are around 400 historic vessels in the register hosted by the Australian National Maritime Museum, 583 preserved steam locomotives⁹, as well as classic cars, agricultural machinery and other kinds of heritage cared for by individuals and by enthusiasts. The vast majority of heritage listed domestic and commercial buildings are in private ownership.

There are also individuals who hold important knowledge; in addition to the speakers of perhaps 150 (often endangered) aboriginal language groups noted in the State of Environment report, there are people with traditional building craft skills such as carpentry and lime mortar, people with memories of major historic events such as veterans, and holders of cultural traditions and stories.

Cultural heritage is also something **we participate in**. There are around 2.6 million international cultural visitors to Australia each year and 9.3 million domestic visitors to cultural and heritage attractions. In the last year 95% of Australians have engaged in at least one heritage activity including visiting a site, watching a history program on television or attending a cultural event, and

⁶ The last comprehensive State of Environment survey was 2006 (Lennon 2006) and the current one is in preparation. Note that it is not easy to find up to date data and I would welcome any feedback on the figures cited here. As data about numbers of heritage assets is not the primary purpose of this essay, all figures should be checked before citing!

⁷ ABS 2009; ABS 2010; see also

http://www.culturaldata.gov.au/sites/www.culturaldata.gov.au/files/Arts_and_Culture_in_Australian_life.pdf

⁸ Collections Council of Australia 2010

⁹ <http://www.australiansteam.com/>

86% have visited a world heritage site.¹⁰ There are many more people who live in heritage buildings or neighbourhoods, who take part in hobbies with a heritage dimension such as restoring historic cars or studying genealogy, or who belong to historical or community societies. About 104 million people visited archives and libraries during 2003-04.

People also participate in heritage through festivals, open days and other activities. This year at the 2011 Melbourne Open festival, over 100,000 people visited 75 open properties across the city, and 9 out of 10 of the most visited places were on the State Heritage Register. Around 70,000 people attended this year's two day Hunter Valley Steam festival, whilst over 94,000 people attended South Australia's history festival in 2011 including film screenings, talks, events and other activities organised by a wide range of individuals and organisations.

Another important way of engaging with cultural heritage is volunteering. Around 34% of adult Australians volunteer, many for arts and heritage organisations.¹¹

Responsibility for this heritage falls to many different people and agencies, from the individuals who search out family histories, to local, State, Territory and Commonwealth agencies dealing with the environment, planning, the arts, education and social issues, as well as cultural institutions such as museums, libraries and archives and community groups. Due to Australia's federal system there may be duplications and inconsistencies between Federal, State, Territory and local listings and jurisdictions. There are also thousands of private owners, companies and organisations from the military to theatre companies who occupy or make use of heritage buildings and sites.

HERITAGE AND SOCIETY

It is clear that arts and culture are playing an increasingly significant role in community engagement in health and well-being, in social inclusion of communities of all kinds (including youth, Indigenous, the aged, those of different cultural and geographic origins, and the socially marginalised) and importantly in reconciliation and the life of people in regional communities.¹²

One of the most powerful books ever written about Australian heritage is Peter Read's *Returning to Nothing – the meaning of lost places*. In it, he captures the impact of loss of place on both individuals and communities. Although each set of circumstances is different – leaving a home country, the building of a road, drought or cyclone – the common threads of the impact of that loss on people's whole sense of themselves is immense. Loss of place is a form of disconnection that is in part a bereavement that has widespread and long term consequences.

Heritage and Health

It is often assumed that traditional culture is the stumbling block to achievement. The Curtin University academic Mike Dockery has shown that the reverse is generally true – that the Indigenous Australians who are happiest and healthiest, with low arrest rates and good educational outcomes are those with a strong attachment to their culture and with a strong Aboriginal identity. The most damaged are the stolen generations, their children and sometimes grand children; the policy of

¹⁰ McDonald 2006; Hossain et al 2005.

¹¹ ABS 4441.0 *Voluntary Work Australia*, 2006.

¹² Government of Western Australia 2003:251

removal has left a legacy that can't be underestimated. The secret to closing the gap may lie in valuing and respecting Aboriginal culture and in finding ways to promote it to improve lives.¹³

Our physical and mental health is not simply a biomechanical construct, but something intimately connected with our social and physical context – where we live, who we know and interact with, the relationships that we seek to build, and our cultural links and connections. In public policy terms this is often referred to as 'wellbeing'.¹⁴

This connection is something that Indigenous people recognise – the role of country and connections to it is explicitly in Indigenous models of health, for example, Aboriginals in the Northern Territory who maintain those traditional cultural ties and connections with country are healthier than those who do not.¹⁵

Although there is relatively little direct research evidence for the contribution of heritage to wellbeing, there are large bodies of research covering the social impacts of the arts, museums and the natural environment, into which heritage often falls. Broadly these studies group impacts into areas such as health and well-being, personal development such as skills and esteem, creativity, cultural awareness and learning and quality of life.¹⁶

In terms of physical health, our increasingly inactive society is leading to rising levels of obesity which in turn impacts significantly on public health expenditure. One review of the health benefits of public parks cited just some of that evidence – a regular walk in the park could reduce the risk of a heart attack by 50%, diabetes by 50% and a fracture of the femur by 40%. In Japan green spaces help people live longer whilst natural views can promote a drop in blood pressure.¹⁷

Planners in USA and elsewhere are now looking at the idea of 'walkability' in the design of new neighbourhoods, after become aware of the health impacts of car dependent sprawling suburbs. The original compact neighbourhood was in fact the Georgian terraces of London, Bath, Edinburgh, Dublin (mirrored in Sydney and Melbourne) where:

For a brief period of just over a century between 1714 and 1830, architects, planners and developers in Britain discovered and perfected an urban form that was cheap to construct, easily reproducible, suitable for a wide range of income levels, adaptable to local physical conditions, aesthetically satisfying, and above all compact in its consumption of space.¹⁸

Place and environment can have as much of an impact on mental health as on physical health¹⁹; taking part in 'green exercise' can lead to improvements in mental health measured through self-esteem, depression, dejection, tension and anxiety. Whilst the mental health benefits of taking part in arts activities including evidence for positive physiological and psychological changes in clinical outcomes, reducing drug consumption, shortening length of stay in hospital, promoting better

¹³ Adele Horin, Sydney Morning Herald, July 16-17 2011

¹⁴ Trewin 2001

¹⁵ Kingsley et al 2009; Burgess et al 2005, quoted in Kingsley 2009:292

¹⁶ Ashworth 2005; Matarasso 1997; Wavell, Baxter, Johnston & Williams 2002; Scott 2003; McCarthy et al 2004.

¹⁷ Full references are cited in CABE (nd)

¹⁸ Ashworth 2005.

¹⁹ Townsend and Weerasuriya 2010; see also the *Journal of Place and Health*.

doctor/patient relationships, improving mental healthcare and developing health practitioners' empathy across gender and cultural diversity.²⁰

Heritage and Social Capital

Some of the benefits that people get from these activities arise from the social interactions that flow from meeting other people in the process²¹. The importance of this idea of 'social capital' in health and wellbeing has become central to much of the recent research in this area. Roughly defined as the social ties and shared values or norms, such as trust and reciprocity, that facilitate co-operation to mutual advantage, there is growing evidence that healthier and happier people have better social networks.

A study of people who took part in local heritage projects found that this kind of social capital – new skills, new contacts and a new confidence in their own abilities – had grown as a result of taking part in those projects.²² Heritage activities that bring people together, such as researching local history, or undertaking bush regeneration or volunteering in a museum all have the potential to create these kinds of connections and skills.

Heritage projects can change attitudes. The Veterans Reunited Program brought together different generations to commemorate the 60th anniversary of World War 2; participants reported positive impacts including enjoyment, inspiration and creativity (78%) and new skills (39%). Veterans who took part felt more respected (82%) whilst 95 % of the students who took part gained a deeper understanding of the contribution of veterans and – as a consequence – had come to think differently about them.

Heritage and Identity

Cultural heritage also plays a critical role in identity. The link is so strong that throughout history places of significance have become the focus of conflict between groups and even nations, from the riots at the Ayodhya Mosque in India, the destruction of the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia. We all construct identities that are both personal and cultural – personal identities emerge from our individual traits and relationships with others, whilst cultural identities emerge from the groups we see ourselves as belonging to and also from some sense of opposition to those we do not. There are also strong links between identity and self esteem.

The identity of a cultural group or even nation rests on the way its heritage is (or is not) represented, in the buildings or sites it chooses to protect and how they are interpreted, in the versions of history taught in schools. Professor Stuart Hall notes that

*Heritage is a powerful mirror. Those who do not see themselves reflected in it are therefore excluded.*²³

²⁰ Staricoff 2004; see also the conference website <http://www.artsandhealth.org/>

²¹ Allen 2005:8-9; ABS 2004; Walker & Hillier (2007) identified the importance of trust and reciprocal relationships with neighbours for older women in metropolitan Adelaide. Sugiyama, et al 2007.

²² GHK 2003.

²³ My notes from his presentation at the Arts Council of England conference, *Whose Heritage?*, Manchester 1999. The published phrase is slightly different (Hall 2005).

Originally slated for demolition, the Maze prison in Northern Ireland used to house paramilitary prisoners during the troubles is the subject of fierce controversy over its future. Like Robben Island in South Africa, Port Arthur in Tasmania, Auschwitz in Poland and so many other sites, the initial urge to demolish the site and erase a difficult past is often over time replaced by recognition of the validity of the past and the importance of remembering.

In a study of how and why Australians value heritage, respondents strongly agree that heritage forms part of the Australian identity (92%) and overwhelmingly support the view that heritage plays an important role in Australia's culture (87%). The Allen research also reminds us that heritage places may contribute towards social stability and cohesion in the community and allow a sense of identity either for the whole community or for members of cultural groups.²⁴

However, this does not mean that respondents saw heritage as a unifying factor – they recognized that different people valued heritage in different ways. Australia has a long tradition of immigration and a sense of displacement and isolation is often a by-product of mobile communities. Gasan Hage writes about the importance of the process of home-building for diaspora communities, and acknowledging one's own history and heritage is often important to people living in a new place. In Griffith in NSW for example, the history and culture of immigrant Italian communities is visible in the distinctively Italian architecture, in a local museum and in local festivals and events that celebrate Italian culture. People turn to heritage as way of both feeling at home in new place, but also of seeking to pass on to future generations a sense of culture and belonging.

Museums often play a core role in this process – either through a public acknowledgement of the history and culture of different communities or by working with groups to discover their own heritage. To take just two of many examples, the Welcome Wall at the Australian Maritime Museum acknowledges the stories of individuals who have come to Australia, whilst the Australian Museum has been working with young people of Pacific Island descent to discover their own history and identity through their Pacific Collections.²⁵

Heritage and Learning

One of the strongest results that emerged from the Deakin survey²⁶ was the weight people gave to the importance of children learning about the past (97% consider heritage education 'very important'). Australia is currently considering a new national curriculum in which history will play a key part. The thinking behind that new curriculum notes that

*Awareness of history is an essential characteristic of any society; historical knowledge is fundamental to understanding ourselves and others, and historical understanding is as foundational and challenging as other disciplines. History ... provides the means whereby individual and collective identities are formed and sustained. It enriches the present and illuminates the future.*²⁷

Museums and heritage sites are also important sources of out of classroom learning:

²⁴ McDonald 2006; Allen 2005.

²⁵ Jordan, K. et al 2009: 377.

²⁶ McDonald 2006.

²⁷ National Curriculum Board 2009.

*Students' interest and enjoyment of history can be enhanced through a range of different approaches such as the use of artefacts, museums, historical sites and hands-on activities.*²⁷

This is supported by 85% parents who believe that visits to museums should be part of the new national curriculum.²⁸ Despite increasingly tight school budgets and the complexities involved in organising school excursions, some 1.35 million students visited national museums to study history, biology, physics and chemistry, English, civics, arts, geography, languages and mathematics and many other subjects directed at all stages of the school curriculum as well as tertiary audiences. Cultural institutions are also moving into life-long learning – the formal and informal ways in which we develop new knowledge throughout life through programs for older and younger audiences.

Of course many museums are scholarly research institutions in their own right. In 2008-09 there were over 500 research projects underway in Australia's major museums, and museums participated in 267 grant funded research projects. The recent Commonwealth *Strategic Roadmap for Research Infrastructure* acknowledges the primary role that museum collections (including artefacts, images, sound recordings, documents, films, animals, insects, plants and geological samples) can play in research, noting digitisation can provide, access for remote, regional and global communities and new opportunities for diverse research disciplines (and that).... the range of disciplines that would benefit from this is vast, including biology, environmental science, ecology, zoology, humanities, arts, social science and health sciences.

Heritage and Civil Renewal

Finally, there can be political benefits to engagement in heritage and the arts. In the UK voting, political party membership and confidence in the political system has been in steep decline. The idea of civil renewal recognises the need to encourage and support awareness and participation in local decision-making and wider civic and political engagement. IPPR looked at the contribution that cultural participation can make to civic life, and found that countries with higher levels of cultural engagement had higher levels of social and institutional trust, and that people who participate in cultural activities are more likely than the average citizen to believe that other people are fair, helpful and can be trusted and to have trust in the police, legal system, politicians and parliament. They also argued that arts and heritage organisations need think about whether they should be doing more to boost active involvement and to create opportunities for people to get involved, rather than simply be 'viewers' or listeners.²⁹

In conclusion, cultural heritage plays a critical role in who we are, how we see ourselves and what we teach our children. It contributes to our personal mental and physical health, and – in a way – the mental and physical health of the nation. That being said, much of the evidence for the benefits of taking part in heritage activities is buried in studies whose primary focus is elsewhere – arts, green space, place or environment.

²⁸ McDonald 2006

²⁹ IPPR nd.; Keaney 2006.

HERITAGE AND THE ECONOMY

In 2005, an Australian Productivity Commission report put forward a deceptively simple proposal that no historic building should be included in a heritage register without first considering the financial costs to the individual owner of doing so. The Commission noted that

*For many private owners, the current use and enjoyment of their property are consistent with, indeed require, maintaining its heritage attributes ... the wider cultural benefits of the place are provided to their community with little added costs, apart from the extra administrative cost involved with government identification, assessment and listing.*³⁰

By focussing simply on the protection of individual buildings as part of the planning system, and of the impact of that on the property rights of a few individuals, the report dismissed the wider social, environmental and indeed economic benefits of heritage to the whole community. It was akin to suggesting that the cost of lost development rights to one owner should influence a decision about whether an endangered species or habitat was of national importance. The Commission did not make clear that the system of **protection** or designation is about determining what assets are important to the whole community; but it is through the process of **managing** those assets (e.g. through the planning system, public policy or fiscal measures that the public and private interests are balanced and negotiated.

This is not to suggest that economics and the protection of the environment or indeed heritage are mutually exclusive topics – ironically, one of the benefits of the work of the commission was to stimulate research into the wider economic value of heritage in Australia.³¹

This constant quest to justify investment in cultural heritage in economic terms mirrors that fought by natural heritage advocates. Environmental economics is based on the idea that if the unregulated operation of the market fails to deliver public goods such as the protection of the environment, there is a need to find public policy instruments that will do so. It explores the costs and benefits of environmental protection and the effectiveness of policy instruments to achieve environmental goals, such as economic or market based incentives or tradeable permits.³²

Environmental economics centres on the idea of natural capital in the form of air and water quality, habitats, species and biodiversity. In a direct parallel, economist David Throsby sees heritage as cultural capital. Like natural capital it is something that we have inherited; it provides a cultural system that supports human cultural endeavour and an important element of cultural diversity. Protecting and investing in cultural capital can produce social, economic or environmental returns, whilst eroding or ‘spending’ it diminishes the ability of future generations to do so.

The primary reason that public bodies support museums or protect heritage buildings is not usually to make an economic return on that investment. Although heritage activities do create jobs – and in some cases for the same cost as programs designed purely to foster economic development – there

³⁰ Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2006, page XXV111.

³¹ This section touches on topics covered in more depth in Throsby 2001. Mason 2005 provides an international literature review and McCarthy 2004 useful lessons for heritage preservation. Australia’s first conference on heritage economics was held in 2000 (AHC 2000) whilst in 2006 the 30th Annual Conference of the ANZRSAI conference focused on heritage and regional development (Martin 2006). Macdonald (nd) also provides a useful overview of the practical application of cost benefit analysis in heritage protection.

³² For example Gilpin 2000.

can be cheaper ways of doing so³³. But this is no reason for heritage practitioners to ignore economics. As Throsby points out, exploring the economic aspects of heritage and heritage protection creates a language and a space in which heritage specialists can communicate with policy makers and others. It also potentially provides new tools and ways of understanding the impact and effectiveness of heritage policy and decision-making.

Economic Studies

Bathurst City Council became frustrated by the constant claims for the economic benefits of motor racing, and wondered what benefits museums and cultural activities brought to the local area. The Western Research Institute looked at the economic impact of twelve council-owned cultural facilities including museums, performing arts venues and art galleries in Bathurst, Dubbo and Orange. Together they created \$36.2m in output, \$14.7m in value added (gross regional product), \$8.9m in household income and 180 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs³⁴ which in the end did not seem to compare well with the claims of \$100m and 570 jobs in Bathurst alone for motor racing (although the survey found many other benefits delivered by the cultural institutions including the contribution to social capital and to people's sense of attachment to the local area).³⁵

One way to measure the value of something is to establish how much people are willing to pay to maintain it. Residents of Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst were actually willing to pay \$57 per head to maintain current levels of access to services; whilst in Queensland, residents were willing to pay \$19.25 to maintain current levels of access to the Queensland Museum (around 2.3 to 2.9 times more than their current contribution!).

Heritage-Led Regeneration

Donovan Rypkema collates American research on the economics of heritage, to help counteract some of the more pervasive arguments against preservation. He argues that in terms of generating local and regional impacts, heritage preservation is perhaps the most effective form of economic development.

For example, in the US \$1m worth of heritage preservation creates:

- 12 more jobs than manufacturing \$1m worth of cars in Michigan;
- 20 more jobs than mining \$1m worth of coal in West Virginia;
- 29 more jobs than pumping \$1m of oil in Oklahoma;
- 22 more jobs than cutting \$1m worth of timber in Oregon;

³³ A study of the economic impacts of 90 Heritage Lottery Fund projects over five years found that HLF grants of £376m had supported 7150 job years in local and regional economies. It noted that *"In general the level of grant provided per net ongoing job created is higher than for HLF grants than for RDA (regional development agency) investments and other economic development programs. This is to be expected given that economic impacts are a positive side effect, rather than a core objective of HLF funding. Nevertheless, the figures suggest that some investments...perform well on economic development grounds and might be justified on those grounds alone"* (GHK 2010:Summary)

³⁴ WRI 2010:5.

³⁵ Bathurst Regional Council Mount Panorama Phase 2 Redevelopment Funding Submission. The amount of support provided by Commonwealth, State and Local Government agencies to either activity to generate this was not clear; although recently the Victorian Government defended the \$50m cost to taxpayers of staging the Australian Formula One Grand Prix in the light of the claim that it generated \$32 and \$39m to the gross state product (Ernst & Young 2011). <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/melbourne-grand-prix-costs-taxpayers-50m-victorian-government-reveals/story-e6frg6nf-1226099713930>

- 12 more jobs than processing \$1m of steel in Pennsylvania;
- 12 more jobs and \$1m spent in manufacturing semi conductors and 9 more jobs than banking services in Colorado.³⁶

American 'downtown revitalisation' is England's 'heritage-led regeneration'. Factors such as the closure of the mining industry in the 1980s, the move away from seaside holidays or the focus of employment in the south-east had left many formerly prosperous towns and villages run-down. By exploring the economic impact of its funding for area based schemes, organisations such as the South West Museums council agencies were able to position heritage more firmly as part of the regional development agendas³⁷. At a national level, the Welsh government has for example argued that the historic environment adds about £840 million in value to the Welsh economy and helps support the equivalent of more than 30,000 full-time jobs. Internationally, the Global Heritage Fund has highlighted the value of heritage in reducing poverty; arguing that the factors that make heritage preservation projects good drivers for local economic development, also make such projects effective forms of aid. Saving the 200 World Heritage sites at risk in the developing world could generate \$100bn by 2025.³⁸

Regional development is a key issue for Australia. With huge distances, changing environmental conditions and markets, many rural communities are suffering from economic and social decline which has had an impact on quality of life and overall wellbeing; and the need to build community capacity and to strengthen regional economic and social opportunities has been a consistent policy theme.³⁹ Anwar McHenry argues strongly for the place of arts in rural revitalisation and the social well being of Australian rural communities, through tourism income generation, enhancing participation and creativity in public decision making, strengthening community capacity and strengthening identity and sense of place. More specifically, a study by the Countryside Agency in England estimated that within 25 years, heritage craft skills would overtake farming as the biggest economic driver in the countryside.

Whilst the distances may be greater in Australia and the issues very different, those Australian rural communities that have actively embraced their heritage such as Broken Hill in NSW with a very positive program of heritage protection and celebration, seem on the surface at least to demonstrate a greater confidence and sense of hope than those which do not.

Heritage and Competitiveness

Heritage also generates economic benefits through its role in attracting tourists to local areas, and the consequent expenditure. Ballarat is part of the Victorian Goldfields Tourism region, which aims to be Australia's premier heritage tourism region. This strategy specifically seeks to capitalize on the particular value of cultural visitors, who as Bruce Leaver notes in his essay on tourism, in general spend more than other tourists and take longer trips.

Over half (51%) of all international visitors to Australia in 2009-10 were cultural visitors (2.6 million). Domestic and international cultural tourists spent around \$15.9bn – 25% of all tourism spend.

³⁶ Rypkema 2005:3, 11.

³⁷ For example, English Heritage 1999, Brandet al. 2000; Travers 2006.

³⁸ GHF 2010.

³⁹ Anwar McHenry 2009 and 2011.

Cultural visitors stay twice as long and spend 70% more than other kinds of visitors; they also travel more. Nearly two thirds (63%) of international visitors visited a historic or heritage building site and over half visited museums or art galleries⁴⁰. In Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, cultural visitors spend more in regional areas than in metropolitan ones, and in Victoria, 30% of the international heritage visitors and 72% of the domestic overnight heritage visitors travelled to regional Victoria, with heritage tourism drawing up to 78% of tourists to some parts of regional Victoria.⁴¹ The City of Perth found that 37% of all visitor spend in Perth is attributable to heritage tourism – a staggering \$350m annually.⁴²

Ironically, heritage becomes more politically interesting once culture is recognised as contributing to the global competitiveness of cities. More and more cities internationally are positioning themselves in terms of culture⁴³ – the same mayor who derided heritage, was more than happy to position London as a cultural city, arguing that a commercial focus risks losing sight of what has made London successful, which lay in its cultural and artistic life, bringing twice as many visitors to London as New York, and 50% more than Paris.⁴⁴

Heritage can be an important factor in what makes a place attractive to residents or businesses. For example, in the city of Ballarat, nearly a third of residents said that heritage was the main or most important reason for living there, and only 12% said that heritage was of no interest to them, whilst the Western Region study found that the number of cultural facilities visited over the past five years was almost as strong as owning one's home in terms of one's commitment to a sense of local place. It found that cultural facilities help people to think differently, and enhance connections and trust between people and a sense of place.⁴⁵

After the UK and New Zealand, Australian households spend more on culture and leisure than any country in the OECD⁴⁶. The scale and importance of the wider creative industries are increasingly seen as business drivers, representing around £31.1bn in 2007-8 contributing more than traditional industries such as agriculture. Unfortunately, like other surveys, Australian creative economic statistics include architecture (which deals with heritage) and design (which is featured in many museums), but not cultural heritage or museums.⁴⁷

The Economic Value of Refurbishment

Heritage can also make a direct contribution to other major industries such as construction. Heritage skills are often seen as a minor aspect of construction industry but in fact in the UK, where in England at least around 25% of the building stock is either older than 1919 or protected⁴⁸, the repair, maintenance and improvement of existing buildings represents 49% of the total construction sector which in itself represents around 8% of GDP. Because it is such a significant element of the

⁴⁰ Regional Tourism study p 9.

⁴¹ Data supplied by Tourism Research Australia.

⁴² City of Perth 2008

⁴³ Evans & Shaw 2006 review some of the literature.

⁴⁴ Mayor of London (nd): 2.

⁴⁵ Morrison 2010:18-19.

⁴⁶ OECD Factbook 2006.

⁴⁷ CIE 2009.

⁴⁸ English House Condition Survey 1996.

construction industry, the Construction Industry Training Board has been championing the need for better traditional building skills such as carpentry, bricklaying and stone masonry.⁴⁹

In Australia the construction is worth \$278bn (6.7% of GDP) and employs around 1m people – 9% of the workforce. Although the building booms of the late 20th century mean that a much smaller percentage of the Australian building stock dates to say pre-1950,⁵⁰ in Victoria (where data is collected on building age) there are still around 55,000 buildings built before 1900 and 250,000 built before 1940. Repair and maintenance are still important; for example, in 1999, 58% of Australian owner occupiers had carried out home renovations in the past decade.⁵¹ In 2009-10 Heritage Victoria issued permits totalling \$1.25 billion in value for works to places on the Victorian Heritage Register alone, which equated to 5.9% of construction activity in the State.

This part of the construction industry requires skills, and yet a study for HCOANZ found that Australia – like Britain – has a significant shortage of people with traditional building skills and in particular bricklaying, carpentry, lead-working and stone masonry, as well as an ageing workforce.

Don Rypkema cites a wide range of research, comparing the economic impact of new building with heritage preservation, and found that a consistent pattern emerges. The cost of rehabilitation can be up to 16% less than new construction, and can reduce construction time by up to 18%. When developers claim that new construction does not cost more than rehabilitation they often do not include the costs of demolition or disposal. For warehouses the cost of stabilisation is usually less than the cost of demolition. He notes that often half of new construction expenditure goes into labour and half into materials; for rehabilitation between 60 and 70% of the cost of the project goes on labour, many of which are local.⁵²

Repair and refurbishment have long been the ‘cinderellas’ of the construction industry, with the majority of training, policy and even tax incentives (e.g. VAT) focussed on new build. Indeed there are often real disincentives to repair old buildings. In the UK repair is more expensive than new build because Value Added Tax (VAT) is charged at a higher rate on repair than on new construction. In Australia heritage buildings typically have different requirements in terms of insurance and banks and lending agencies impose different conditions on loans for heritage buildings than they do for newer buildings. This, combined with the fact maintenance is often seen as less attractive to owners than, for example, upgrading a kitchen⁵³ and many public bodies fail to maintain their assets, means that heritage buildings inevitably become problem buildings.

Heritage and Property Values

Finally it is important to return to the view that heritage protection reduces property values. There is no doubt that in areas where development pressures are important, and there is a change in zoning which means any land owner might expect to reap considerable financial benefits by subdividing property or realising development opportunities, the costs to the individual owner whose property is disadvantaged in terms of development benefit foregone do outweigh the benefits.

⁴⁹ NHTG 2005.

⁵⁰ There are around 7.5m occupied houses in Australia and many more buildings and around 15,235 items listed in state and territory heritage registers.

⁵¹ ABS 2002

⁵² Rypkema 2005:12, 89ff.

⁵³ UWE 2003

But there have also been studies in the USA, Australia and UK that consistently show that heritage protection rarely reduces property values, and indeed often increases it. For example, in Braidwood NSW where an entire town was listed in order to preserve its appearance and boost tourism and jobs, there were real concerns about the impact of that listing on the local economy, with 50% of residents in favour and 31% against. Despite initial concerns there has been a positive economic benefit. In the end, as Irons and Armitage note for Australia, in general residential property prices are more likely to be affected by external economic factors such as interest rates, property location, urban sprawl and regional population growth. Property values in towns with more extensive heritage controls tend to be higher than similar regional townships without such controls.⁵⁴

Conclusion – Heritage Economics

Whilst heritage economics is still in its infancy, and lacks some of the rigour and sophistication of environmental economics, there is now a growing body of literature that uses economic research tools to explore the value of heritage. Investing in cultural heritage will never overcome the fundamental underlying issues that have devastated parts of rural Australia or urban America, but museums and cultural heritage can make a contribution, and does deserve to be at the table when regeneration is being discussed. Rypkema wryly points out,

In the long run preservation's economic impact is far less important than its educational, environmental, cultural, aesthetic, historical and local impact. In the long run, all of those other values of historic preservation are more important than economic value. But as the great economist John Maynard Keynes said, "In the long run we're all dead." In the short run preservation's economic impact is one of the tools that preservationists have learned to use well.

THE GREEN DEBATE – HERITAGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Culture has a huge role to play in the environment – cultural institutions such as museums are playing a major role in environmental awareness, research and sustainability, and an understanding of culture itself has a vital role to play in the management of 'so-called' natural heritage areas. As Indigenous Australians articulate so well, there is always a cultural dimension to land and place, whether it is through the traditional stories and connections for aboriginal Australians or through the identity and distinctiveness of our towns and cities.

However, this section of the essay focuses on one aspect of the contribution that cultural heritage can make to the environment – the role of older buildings in environmental sustainability.

Carbon Villains or Carbon Heroes? The Environmental Contribution of Older Buildings

*Demolishing [historic] buildings should be a last, not a first resort. The mounting environmental cost of wasting embodied energy should make us take heritage seriously.*⁵⁵

Australia builds the biggest houses in the world. Over the past 20 years the cost has increased fourfold; the average size of land declined and floor space increased by 32%. Australia's houses are

⁵⁴ English Heritage 2002; Cotterill nd:2; Rypkema 1994:3; Allen 2005:vi; Irons & Armitage 2011.

⁵⁵ Bevan, R., 2008

7% larger than American houses, twice the size of European houses and three times as large as British houses.⁵⁶

Many of those new buildings will replace an existing building, the materials from which will contribute to the other solid construction waste that represents around 30-50% of the one tonne of waste per person each year that Australia produces (ABS Construction and the Environment). That existing building may also actually be more energy efficient – with a deep verandah and smaller windows to reduce solar gain, and traditional passive solar design.

Building construction and use consume significant amounts of energy, through both the construction process and through the use of energy in heating, cooling, lighting and other building operations.

New construction uses energy. In 1994-5 Australian construction produced around 7.1% of total greenhouse gas emissions, the third highest after electricity production and direct household consumption.⁵⁷ That energy is produced when materials used in new construction such as steel, aluminium and concrete are extracted, manufactured and transported.

In addition to the energy used to construct a building, almost a quarter (23%) of Australian greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to energy demand in the buildings (e.g. heating and cooling, lighting) – roughly split between domestic and commercial buildings.⁵⁸ Heating and cooling and other energy use in buildings uses upwards of 33% of all energy use, as well as consuming the vast majority of natural gas and timber in Australia.

Clearly reducing the energy efficiency of both construction and, more importantly, building use, can make a significant contribution to environmental targets. A report for the Commonwealth Government set out to identify what Australia might achieve in terms of reducing energy use and greenhouse gas consumption from buildings by 2020, given that many countries in the world are aiming for a 50-70% reduction.⁵⁹

But like most other studies dealing with this area, the terms of reference for the report, and its conclusions, focus almost entirely on building new and more energy efficient buildings.

However, there is more and more evidence that suggests that a great deal more can be achieved at lower cost by moving the focus of energy efficiency in buildings from new buildings to old and recognising that improving older buildings might save more energy, be cheaper and – based on Rypkema's statistics – create more jobs.⁶⁰ But unless further research is done, there is a risk that pressure to meet environmental standards will lead to incentives and encouragement to demolish good older buildings because they are not seen to meet modern standards of energy efficiency.

⁵⁶ CommSec Economics 2009.

⁵⁷ ABS 2003.

⁵⁸ CIE 2010:11.

⁵⁹ Pitt and Sherry 2010.

⁶⁰ The European Commission certainly thinks so. The EC Draft energy efficiency action plan aims to refurbish 15 million buildings by 2020 which could save Europe 66 million tonnes of CO2 while creating 300,000 direct and 1.1million indirect jobs each year.
http://ec.europa.eu/energy/efficiency/consultations/2009_08_03_eeap_en.htm

Embodied Energy and Carbon

The news that the UK construction industry is to go 'zero carbon' by 2016 has generated a flurry of interest in the contribution that the repair and refurbishment of existing buildings can make to reducing carbon emissions.

An unlikely campaigner for heritage – the UK Empty Homes Agency – makes a strong case for refurbishing existing buildings by arguing in terms of the impact on greenhouse gases:

*Reusing empty homes could make an initial saving of 35 tonnes of carbon dioxide per property by removing the energy locked into new building material and construction.*⁶¹

The amount of energy used in building construction and building operations is often represented as either embodied energy or embodied carbon – measures of the amount of energy or carbon dioxide used in the materials and in the construction of the building. Of course if a building is demolished that energy or carbon is wasted; constructing a new building will then require further energy.

It is often difficult to imagine what that much embodied energy or carbon dioxide looks like. For example, a typical Australian heritage-listed State school represents around 10,700 GJ of embodied energy or around 4,000 tonnes of CO₂ whilst a small nineteenth century masonry courthouse incorporates 1,700 GJ, equivalent to 650 tonnes of CO₂. The State of Victoria has been using the idea of 'black balloons' full of carbon dioxide – a State school would thus contain 80 million black balloons full of CO₂. Another way might be to imagine aluminium cans. One aluminium drink can contains around 15g of aluminium; the embodied energy of aluminium is 170MJ/kg; recycling a coke can saves 95% of embodied energy; therefore the energy equivalent of recycling a coke can is 2.4MJ. Thus demolishing a typical small commercial building on the high street would wipe out the environmental benefit of 1,344,000 aluminium cans.⁶²

The most important thing is that most measures of energy efficiency or improvement fail to take into account either the embodied energy or the embodied carbon in existing buildings.⁶³ In order to redress this, Historic Scotland compared three scenarios – leaving a leaky old two bed roomed cottage, refurbishing it, and demolishing it to create a new energy efficient one. The 80 tonnes of CO₂ created by the new cottage would be paid back over 15-20 years; only 8 tonnes were required to refurbish the old building. It would take more than a century for a high specification new home to catch up this advantage.

In 'How bad are bananas – the carbon footprint of nearly everything', Mike Berners points out that

If this one study is representative, the message for the construction industry is clear. Investment in the very highest levels of energy-efficiency for new homes is, even at its best, an extremely costly way of saving carbon. Investing in improvements to existing homes is dramatically more cost-effective.

There is a pervasive view that older buildings are less energy efficient than modern ones. In the UK, the Energy Saving Trust even went so far as to dub pre-1919 homes 'carbon villains'. Yet there have been a number of UK studies that show that in terms of thermal efficiency, older buildings actually

⁶¹ UK Empty Homes Agency 2004.

⁶² Alternatively, a litre of petrol contains about 35 MJ of energy, so the embodied energy in one nineteenth century terrace house would be enough to send a car half way to the moon.

⁶³ Values for typical building materials can be found at Greenspec <http://www.greenspec.co.uk/embodied-energy.php>

perform much better – and that the poorest performing buildings may actually be from the 1970s and 80s.⁶⁴ Many house builders claim that new homes are four times more efficient than older houses, but again, the UK Empty Homes Agency study refutes that. This is borne out by a study conducted by HCOANZ which undertook National Australian Building Environmental Rating System (NABERS) assessment of four Australian heritage buildings – one from the late nineteenth century, an early twentieth century building, an inter-war heritage listed commercial building and a 1960s office building. The three older buildings showed very good/strong energy performance but the 1960s building demonstrated poor performance.⁶⁵

Meeting Energy Efficiency Standards

The real challenge, both in Australia and elsewhere has been to integrate heritage and sustainability issues into building codes and green rating tools, which were often initially designed to be applied to new construction. Too often the ‘hard’ requirements of environmental standards designed for new buildings conflict with the character, variability and significance of historic buildings and often fail to take account of the savings that can be made by people in how buildings are used.⁶⁶ In accounting for energy or carbon dioxide, ratings tools also don’t always recognise the contribution that reusing buildings can make, or even the contribution that the way a building is used on a daily basis can make.

Heritage Victoria has looked at domestic and commercial buildings across Australia to explore acceptable design solutions that will enable heritage buildings to meet building legislation standards for energy efficiency.⁶⁷ The studies identified the amount of embodied energy in the building and undertook 100 year life cycle analysis of energy usage. They also identified a number of simple interventions that would improve water and energy efficiency.

Despite a climate of negativity about the green benefits of older buildings, Australia now has a range of pioneering case studies that show how heritage buildings can be retrofitted to meet environmental standards.

In Melbourne, the Goods Shed North was refurbished by Architects Lovell Chen BVN and Elenberg Fraser. It is the first heritage-listed building in the state to achieve a 5 Star Green Star rating and has won awards for architectural design, sustainability and heritage. At a Queensland conference on commercial heritage buildings and sustainability, Mathew Smith of Arkhefield discussed the sustainability features in the reuse of two historic buildings – the Barracks at Petrie Terrace in Brisbane and the Cairns Cruise Port Terminal, whilst Haico Schepers of Arup focused on 39 Hunter Street, Sydney, the first refurbished heritage-listed office building to achieve a six star rating.

These are all outstanding examples of how heritage protected commercial buildings can meet new standards, but given that 98% of Australia’s existing commercial office buildings have been built without sustainability considerations, the problem is very much larger, and does not always involve

⁶⁴ Good Homes Alliance commenting on Energy Saving Trust Report. March 30th 2011. Downloaded from <http://ihbconline.co.uk/newsarchive/?p=2565>

⁶⁵ BEAC, Heritage Commercial Buildings Project: NABERS Results June 2011.

⁶⁶ In some cases those improvements can also have negative health impacts (e.g. through sealing buildings and reducing natural ventilation).

⁶⁷ RMIT 2010.

major works. For example, the general manager of AE Smith wanted to prove that you can teach an older building new tricks:

*We wanted to demonstrate to our customers that older, smaller and less “sophisticated” buildings can be energy efficient by putting in place some simple measures.”*⁶⁸

The building already had good existing features, such as good natural ventilation, but one of the key factors was the human element – turning off lights and air conditioning when not in use and opening windows. In fact, according to the Warren Centre at Sydney University, most buildings can achieve a 4 star NABERS rating simply through the management practices of owners through activities such as switching off lights.

That being said, projects such as the TEC Existing Buildings Project, are seeking to show how 98% of commercial office buildings in Australia that are built without sustainability considerations can in fact meet modern standards.⁶⁹

Similar arguments are now being made for domestic buildings. There are around 7 million existing detached homes in Australia, and around 100,000 new houses built every year. The CIE argues that there may actually be diminishing returns in pressing for higher green standards to be met through building new homes, and that better economic return and a higher quantum gain in energy can be achieved by refurbishing older buildings. They argue that the efficiency of advancing from 1 to 2 stars for older homes would be five times that achieved by advancing from 5 to 6 stars for new homes.

*Although the marginal costs may be higher to achieve star rating improvements in existing homes, the marginal benefits will also be higher, and if marginal benefits exceed marginal costs, the marginal net benefits would apply to a considerably larger housing stock in the case of existing homes relative to new ones.*⁷⁰

Waste

As noted above, Australians currently send approximately one tonne of waste per person per year to landfill. Construction and demolition waste can make up to 40% of this landfill.

Since the mid 1990s there have been initiatives to reduce this waste. The WasteWise construction program by 2001 had enabled a number of major companies to decrease the amount of landfill by up to 90%. Despite this, construction waste remains a problem and under the current National Waste policy includes a strategy to continue to encourage best waste practice management and resource management for construction and demolition, and a working group has been set up to look at this. It would be useful to explore how incentives to retain existing buildings might contribute.

Conclusions – Heritage and the Environment

In the rush to meet new ‘green’ standards, there is a risk that older buildings will be needlessly demolished and that the very targets that green rating seeks to achieve – the reduction of greenhouse gas emission – will be reduced simply by the failure to acknowledge the value and

⁶⁸ AE Smith 2011

⁶⁹ Taylor 2009. http://www.auszeh.org.au/ecos_retrofit.pdf

⁷⁰ CIE 2010:12-13.

benefits of actually retaining existing buildings. If embodied energy is included in calculations of greenhouse gas emissions, then the advantages of retaining and retrofitting older buildings are much more apparent. In order to create a level playing field, the various standards and rating systems that apply to new building, to infrastructure and other projects need to explicitly incorporate calculations of the embodied energy of existing structures, and also the waste implications of their demolition.

BARRIERS

During the 1960s the strategic posture of the preservation movement was then, as it sometimes is now, mostly crisis-oriented and essentially defensive in nature)...happily also recognised that historic preservation might serve an important purpose on the daily lives of people and communities.⁷¹

If heritage matters so much and Australians care about their heritage and believe it should be better protected, and we are now beginning to articulate the contribution that heritage can make to wider public policy areas such as health, greenhouse gas emissions, society and economic development, why is cultural heritage so often ignored in public policy? What are the barriers preventing cultural heritage from playing a greater role in the life of Australians?

A Difficult Past

The unspoken issue and perhaps the biggest barrier is that Australia has a difficult past. The British settlement or invasion and subsequent treatment of Indigenous people is something that both communities struggle to deal with. Nobody wants to be ashamed of their past. But at the same time it is important not to let those feelings cloud the whole process of historic discovery, understanding, and ultimately reconciliation.

At the same time, Australia has the oldest living culture in the world, and an extraordinary richness of collections, stories and places.

The Australian Burra Charter – an Australia ICOMOS document which sets the philosophical basis for heritage conservation – is important because it allows different voices for the past. By emphasising what is significant and to whom, it ensures that the heritage process recognises those different views and values.

The best way to deal with the Australian past is to continue to acknowledge, recognise and explore it in all of its different aspects. Hiding or erasing the past leaves it more open to manipulation. History is part of culture, and culture part of identity.

Lack of Evidence-Based Policy

The lack of data remains a chronic problem for reporting on Australia's heritage, and the condition of many aspects of this heritage is unknown. Knowledge and management of Indigenous cultural heritage is limited, and the decline in Indigenous languages continues.⁷²

Fed up with the constant maligning of heritage, Malcolm Cooper set out to classify the many ways in which heritage is commonly disparaged. These include discrediting the heritage asset (older

⁷¹ Stipe 2003: 452

⁷² Department of Environment and Heritage 2006:13.

buildings are 'slums' or carbon villains); rubbishing the philosophy (heritage is backward looking, old buildings inflexible, we have too many museums, old buildings blight areas and heritage bodies are unrealistic) and criticising the system (slow, creating additional expense and risk, the legislation is confusing and its operators incompetent).

But if such myths persist, it is because the evidence needed to refute them is neither collected nor disseminated. Expenditure on heritage is often buried or hidden, or spread across more than one department. Data about heritage practice, impacts and expenditure is scattered across state, local and federal government and often buried under other headings or collated sporadically. In Australia it is particularly difficult to disaggregate spending on natural heritage from cultural heritage.⁷³

As well as information collected by ABS on museums and cultural industries, data on Australian heritage is published in the State of the Environment Report, currently under preparation but last updated in 2006.⁷⁴ The report ranges widely across all kinds of cultural heritage, including data on assets, employment, funding, tourism and community responses, but even so, each year, the summary notes that data on heritage is inadequate, and each year as a result the number of heritage indicators is reduced. HCOANZ also collect historic heritage data. Neither of these is comprehensive.

Even where data exists about heritage, there is often a lack of research about it to inform policy – is the funding effective? Is it sufficient? How effective are policies? What difference can it make to communities, the environment or other agendas?

Cultural heritage has been slow to develop evidence-based policy, but this is beginning to change. 'Heritage Counts' is an annual digest of data about the historic environment which also summarises economic and social impact research. Heritage funding bodies (such as HLF below), now commit a proportion of their funding to evaluating the impact of their work and are beginning to assess whether funding for cultural heritage actually delivers on what it promises.⁷⁵ It is also important to develop academic capacity in this field – university departments are only just beginning to address heritage policy research.⁷⁶

But data and research also need to be deployed. In Europe, cultural heritage employs around 8 million people indirectly and the automobile industry around 12 million people – yet as Terje Nypan asks – which has the stronger advocacy?⁷⁷ Like Don Rypkema in the US, Nypan is using heritage information strategically to challenge assumptions.

⁷³ Federal expenditure on cultural institutions such as museums, galleries and libraries falls within Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, whilst expenditure on cultural heritage protection is elsewhere. ABS classifies art galleries, museums, zoological parks and aquariums, botanic gardens libraries, performing arts and cinemas as cultural venues and events, but excludes wildlife parks, public parks and national parks. The ABS classification of cultural occupations excludes scientists (some of whom work in museums). However recreational parks and gardens are included as cultural industries (if not occupations). The ABS classifications; labour classifications and local government classifications.

⁷⁴ Lennon 2006.

⁷⁵ English Heritage 2010; for a review of the impact of heritage funding in UK see Clark 2004; Clark and Maeer 2008. See also <http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/howwework/Pages/Evaluation.aspx>. The evaluations of the Government Heritage Restoration Program in 1998 and 2002 for Sinclair Knight Merz for Victoria are also good examples.

⁷⁶ This may be because academic funding bodies have not historically seen research into applied heritage practice as valuable as core academic subjects such as anthropology, archaeology, history or geography; and because such fields do not always have access to specialist economic, environmental or social research skills.

⁷⁷ Nypan 2004:1

Collecting proper heritage data requires leadership, resources and commitment, but the benefits are huge in terms of being able to make the connection between heritage and other agendas, and thus to often leverage funding or recognition for heritage. The ongoing HCOANZ project addresses part of the problem, but a national commitment to cultural heritage in data in its widest sense, strengthened by input from State and Local Government would go a long way towards tackling the invisibility cultural heritage in Australia's policy landscape.

Heritage at Risk

*.. a heritage survey "industry" has developed over the last 5 years that has contributed to unacceptable work practices, unnecessary heritage surveys, inaccurate data recordings and unnecessary expense for the mining and petroleum exploration industry and the public of Western Australia.*⁷⁸

It is hard to respond to such charges or to even develop a strategy for Australian cultural heritage without a clear picture of what is happening to it.

The suspicion is that it is disappearing rapidly. In Western Australia almost all of the permits to destroy Aboriginal cultural sites for mining are granted.

In Victoria:

- there has been a 58% increase in heritage places at risk in Victoria since 2006;
- nearly 60% of state significant places need some repair;
- 1,145 properties of State significance (59 per cent of those surveyed) were in need of conservation or maintenance work within the next 12-18 months in 2008;⁷⁹
- It was estimated that 12 heritage places would be lost each year without heritage grants;
- an estimated 30-40 per cent of Victoria's known archaeological sites have been destroyed over the last 30 years – a rate of loss of between 70 and 90 a year.

Local government evidence also suggests that current trends could lead to the loss by 2024 of 10-15% of the places that were extant in 2004.⁸⁰

Each year the Australian National Trusts identify the top ten heritage items at risk and Peter Dowling has reported on the most important national issues that cause items to be at risk including poor legislation, urban development, poor conservation of items and the reuse of former military sites. Pressures such as coastal development, population growth and other factors are also having an impact.⁸¹

Yet much of this is anecdotal – as noted above there remains no systematic national data on patterns of loss for Indigenous or historic sites, or movable cultural heritage items, and as a result it

⁷⁸ Review of Approval process in WA. Downloaded from:

http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/documents/Review_of_Approval_Processes_070809_WEB.pdf

⁷⁹ Marshall 2008:27.

⁸⁰ EPHC 2004:2,39.

⁸¹ Dowling 2010; Lennon 2006:17.

is impossible to develop policy or respond to challenges. It is even more important to understand WHY heritage is at risk.

One of the biggest factors is development, but as Richard Mackay notes, the reason heritage is so at risk from development is because heritage issues are often only identified after an application is made. Thus heritage automatically becomes a problem. In contrast, the proactive mapping of biodiversity such as native vegetation means that prospective developers are aware of possible issues at an early stage. In order to manage costs and maximise return, projects want as much certainty as possible. The solution suggested by the Western Australian report cited above is to invest more public resources in the judicial system to resolve disputes – perhaps it would be better to invest in proactive heritage data and mapping so that issues are highlighted early. It is cheaper to avoid or design around a heritage issue at a very early stage in a project than it is to come across it at a late stage.⁸²

Part of the process of mapping heritage at risk has to also involve understanding those underlying structural factors. The most common reason that heritage places or sites are at risk is that an owner has paid too much for a site on the basis of an unrealistic development expectation. As noted above in this essay other risk factors include the drive for energy efficiency, and ...⁸³. There can be fiscal disincentives to caring for heritage such as unfair tax burdens on heritage owners, or additional requirements for people seeking to mortgage or insure heritage properties.

Most of the damage that occurs to cultural heritage is not deliberate – it happens because cultural heritage issues are not identified clearly, and early in the process. Land use development, environmental performance, fiscal regulation or even disability access or occupational health and safety, all have the potential to put cultural heritage at risk, but only if heritage is seen as a problem and not an opportunity. We need to spend as much time ‘embedding’ heritage issues into social, economic and environmental debates, as thinking about heritage itself.

Thirty years ago a similar situation existed for the natural environment, and it was only by making those wider connections that things changed.

Funding

There are three elements to cultural heritage funding:

- the resources that private owners and donors contribute to maintaining heritage places, collections and knowledge;
- grant in aid provided by public bodies and private foundations to help owners acquire, maintain and manage those resources or provide activities such as programs and exhibitions;
- operational expenditure on cultural heritage institutions such as parks, museums, galleries and archives, and regulatory bodies.

⁸² There are a range of relating to the operation of heritage in the Australian land use planning system including the need for policies, a bias in favour of development, issues facing private owners, overlaps between State and Federal systems, poor early identification and the incremental loss of sites including Aboriginal heritage. These topics should be dealt with in a separate discussion paper.

⁸³ Australia is not alone. Terje Nypan notes that for example, twelve of the European Union environmental directives intended to protect the environment actually destroy heritage.

Because that funding is scattered across agencies and topics it is very difficult to get an overall picture.

Private Owners

The majority of heritage is in private ownership and most of it gets little or no public support – buildings may be in use as commercial shops, offices, and venues, as churches or homes or as educational institutions, and the direct use value of the asset is insufficient to cover their upkeep. Equally, there are many private owners and collectors of archives, artworks, historic vessels, vehicles and other machinery, as well as a considerable amount of philanthropic support for cultural heritage activities.

Grants

Although there is private support, public funding is also essential to maintaining cultural heritage. The fundamental issue is that heritage protection involves recognition of public interest in property regardless of ownership. Thus the individual owner of a protected building may forego development benefits that might be enjoyed by a neighbouring unlisted building. These disbenefits are often in part mitigated by the provision of grants or other incentives to owners of heritage sites. (Public support also enables public access to heritage -see below).

In the five years to 2005, the Commonwealth dispersed around \$10.6m for historic cultural heritage grants to owners; according to HCOANZ, in 2008-09 there was around \$5m provided for grants to owners from all sources.

That funding can make a difference. For example, in Victoria it is estimated an additional 129 State and locally listed places would have been lost between 1999 and 2010 (12 per year) if they had not received funding from Heritage Victoria. That funding also brings in other support, and delivers other benefits. Heritage Victoria estimates that every \$1 of grant aid leverages \$2.53 from other sources. That funding also creates community assets from unused places, and preserves places that would have been lost, as well as facilitating the work of volunteers.

Yet that resource is rapidly diminishing. In Victoria alone, funding for heritage grants has fallen by 73% since 1999; the nominal value has fallen by 40% and the average value of each grant by 56%. And whilst around 94% of heritage is the responsibility of local councils, just over half have some form of heritage assistance and just a quarter offer any funding.⁸⁴ In comparison, between 1996 and 2004 the Natural Heritage Trust alone disbursed around \$1.6bn.⁸⁵

This equates to around 23c per capita (or \$2.47 for the year of the stimulus package).⁸⁶ It is worth contrasting the amount Australians said they would be prepared to pay to better protect heritage:

- \$5.53 per person per year for every 1,000 additional places protected from loss;

⁸⁴ HCOANZ data sets.

⁸⁵ Lennon 2006:28; note that lack of funding does not reflect lack of demand - the welcome \$54m provided for cultural heritage in 2009/10 as part of the Commonwealth Stimulus package was easily distributed.

⁸⁶ Based on around \$5m per annum divided by an Australian population of 21874900, and excluding the operating costs of cultural institutions or heritage protection bodies.

- \$1.35 per person per year for a 1 per cent increase in the proportion of places in good condition; and
- \$3.60 per person per year for a 1 per cent increase in the proportion of places that are accessible to the public.⁸⁷

The benefits of funding for heritage are perhaps best demonstrated through evaluations of the c.£300m per annum invested by the UK Heritage Lottery Fund. With a remit including museums, libraries, archives, biodiversity, historic buildings and intangible heritage such as oral history, the Fund has demonstrated that heritage grants can leverage significant social, economic and environmental benefits as well as safeguarding heritage. The Fund targeted deprived areas, multi cultural groups and under recognised heritage such as industrial heritage as well as community groups and young people.⁸⁸

The editor of the British Medical Journal once argued that spending just 0.5% of the healthcare budget on arts would improve the health of the people of Britain.⁸⁹ Another critical barrier is an unwillingness to recognise that funding cultural heritage projects can deliver education, social, environmental and other outcomes. It is vital to ensure that the rules and guidance from other agencies involved in health, environmental regulation and social policy for example, explicitly recognise the contribution that heritage can make to their core outcomes.⁹⁰

There are also many other creative mechanisms for supporting cultural heritage initiatives other than direct grant aid to owners. The Australian Cultural Gifts program encourages private owners to donate collections to museums through tax incentives whilst the current Australian National Trusts operate a tax incentive model that could be applied more widely to historic buildings. For buildings at risk, one option is the rolling building preservation trust model, in which properties at risk are repaired and returned to the market, and the funding reinvested in future projects. Public funding is used to overcome the conservation deficit whereby the cost of repair outweighs the final value of the property. The advantage of this model is that it brings buildings back into use; the disadvantage is that it relies on obtaining the property at no cost.

Operational Funding

The final area is operational funding for heritage agencies and cultural institutions. Across Australia in 2007-08 there was \$658.7m provided by government for museums (including art museums and historic houses).⁹¹ Funding is also provided for national parks and reserves that manage cultural heritage resources. Operational expenditure on the protection of cultural heritage assets at federal, state and local council level would be additional to that but is impossible to disaggregate. Most state and Commonwealth organisations involved in cultural heritage such as museums have faced year on year efficiency dividends and report steadily falling levels of government support.

⁸⁷ Allen 2005.

⁸⁸ Clark and Maeer 2008.

⁸⁹ Smith 2002.

⁹⁰ Around £90m was leveraged for rural heritage conservation in England by ensuring that agricultural subsidy grants explicitly recognised local heritage activities.

⁹¹ ABS 2010.

Voluntary Sector

One of the most important heritage resources in Australia is people.

There are of course the many passionate private individuals who care for heritage assets such as historic vessels, cars and machinery, or the owners who cherish their historic buildings and landscapes. There are the members of local history and heritage societies, the thousands of volunteers who give the time and the hundreds of ‘friends’ groups who band together to support museums, national parks, and other sites. There are also individuals with special skills and knowledge – the speakers of Indigenous languages, the holders of cultural knowledge and traditions, and the craftsmen who pass on the skills needed to repair old buildings or recreate Aboriginal technology.

If the people across Australia who care about heritage came together, this would be a powerful alliance. Whilst the National Trusts, historical societies and Australia ICOMOS have just signed an agreement to work together, there are many more interested groups, from transport heritage groups to museums and parks organisations. The UK Heritage Alliance for example, now represents a much wider spectrum of heritage groups, and as a result, is now a powerful heritage advocate.

It is also important that institutions such as museums recognise and harness the expertise of non-professionals. Scientists have recognised that fishermen, walkers, bird watchers and others often have a lot of specialist knowledge and can make a major contribution to biodiversity monitoring and data collection; whilst a partnership between metal detectorists and archaeologists in the UK is also providing important scholarly insights into the past. Museums are increasingly involving people more in their work, contributing their own knowledge and expertise to understanding collections, recording buildings, or mapping culture. Finding ways to engage people and harness that knowledge not only contributes to our understanding, but delivers some of the wider social benefits outlined earlier.

There is a national Volunteering Strategy underway, lead by the Minister for Social Inclusion. The consultation document argues that people increasingly want to volunteer, but organisations need to do more to make this happen. Recognising the role of volunteers in heritage is a first step.

Policy Leadership

Australia has a long tradition of policy leadership in heritage. The Green Bans and the community protests against the destruction of heritage in The Rocks in the 1970s inspired many people around the world to see that cultural heritage was something that mattered to everyone. Many Australian national parks pioneered co-management with Indigenous groups, and more recently, the Burra Charter has inspired countries such as China, Canada, the USA, Ireland, Slovenia, New Zealand and the UK to move towards a ‘values based’ approach.⁹²

Yet within Australia, cultural heritage is losing ground. The Council of Australian Governments has a long term agenda focussed on areas where cultural heritage can make a difference – including economic and social participation; a national economy driven by competitive advantage; a more sustainable sustainable and liveable Australia; better health services and a more sustainable health

⁹² For example, the English Heritage ‘Conservation Principles’ relies heavily on philosophy that originated in Australia and the

system for all Australians; and closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.⁹³ Yet cultural and heritage ministers no longer meet (although Environmental Ministers continue to do so).

Because of the structure of Australian government, Federal leadership on heritage issues is essential, whether on data, policy, legislation or operations; but that leadership means in turn building capacity at all levels. The majority of cultural heritage assets, including museums, are the responsibility of local government – the tier of government least well resourced to care for them. The local authority responses to the Productivity Commission revealed an overarching message that local government was committed to heritage conservation, however, faced issues with inadequate resourcing.⁹⁴

An Australian heritage strategy will be an important first step in positioning heritage in a wider policy context and demonstrating the benefits that investing in cultural heritage can deliver across the whole spectrum of Australian life from cities and rural areas, to health and well being. It can make the link between heritage and good design and quality life, and demonstrate that cultural heritage is more than a few protected places.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the saddest things revealed by the Deakin survey was that many Australians regret that they do not know enough about their own cultural heritage or that of others. People were almost embarrassed to discuss heritage, fearing that they would seem ignorant. But there is also a hunger to learn more about the past, and particularly that of Indigenous Australians and also minority communities.⁹⁵

Australians want more from their cultural heritage, which means a public culture that acknowledges respects and engages with heritage, rather than routinely deriding it.

The challenge for a heritage strategy is to explain very clearly just how broad cultural heritage is, and how it touches our lives in so many ways, and from there to articulate the benefits that can flow in terms of the economy, society and the environment. Then the issue is not just what heritage agencies can do to better leverage those benefits, but how heritage can play a bigger role in our future.

There is no point in over claiming benefits. As cultural policy specialist Sara Selwood once remarked, culture will not '*cure the sick, raise the dead and eradicate world poverty*'⁹⁶, but it can still make a difference to our lives. Unless we can capture evidence for that difference, it will be hard to argue for resources or commitment, or refute myths.

The past is not always an easy place, but it is part of who we are and want to be. The collective Australian political fear of the past is not something that individuals share. It is time for Australians to stop being afraid of the past.

⁹³ COAG 2011

⁹⁴ Wood 2007:17. Two initiatives are worth considering – the idea of local heritage 'Champions' – council members who are a voice for heritage in their local area, and also the HELM website that provides access to a whole range of guidance and other documents for local authorities.

⁹⁵ McDonald 2006.

⁹⁶ Selwood (nd):1.