

ESSAY: WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS FOR HERITAGE PROTECTION?

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INTRODUCTION

It's a dance. Government and community. Sometimes a waltz, sometimes a tango. Or perhaps a rave. Waltzing with the government leading, guiding, supporting a cooperative partner. A tango, a dance with more fire but a partnership. A rave, each in their own world, dancing but with whom?

Often, the community feels like a wall-flower, excluded from the government's dance but at least able to wait at the side of the dance floor and hope for an invitation to join in. At other times, they are locked outside in the cold.

The government and the community. It is not a dance amongst equals. Nor should it be. Each has their own roles. This essay seeks to explore the roles and mutual expectations of the community and government on the dance floor of heritage – cultural and natural. It looks at the expectations each has of the other, and the basis of those expectations, along with how those expectations have changed over time and will certainly change in the future.

In turn, where do conflicting expectations arise? Underpinning these ideas are notions of active citizenship and civil society, about governance, about community engagement and about consensus building.

Further, the essay draws on material about community organisations as an indicator of community interests and activism, and on a limited range of material about expressed community values about heritage.

It asks whether there is an inevitability about the push-me pull-me nature of the dance floor tussle as each struggles to set the dance steps.

Lastly it looks at the frameworks that might be explored when better alignment of expectations are desired.

This essay is very much a personal reflection, drawing on years of working in the heritage industry, generally for and with government but also often tasked with getting the potential dance partners talking, listening to and respecting each other.

Framing questions in the brief asked: What is the expected role of governments in heritage conservation? What are the current outcomes? Are community expectations reasonable? Are they or how could they be met? Heritage is defined as natural, Indigenous and historic (although the writer's experience is primarily in cultural heritage), and the scale of interest was agreed to be national through to local perspectives.

Some research and published material has been found and used; however, it represents an eclectic and serendipitous gathering of ideas rather than a piece of rigorous research. Much is therefore indicative rather than definitive. Examples are cited where needed to illustrate a point.

Care will be needed if this essay is to be more than an internal working document to ensure that the examples cause no offense.

THE DANCERS

'Public concern about environmental issues, such as drought, bushfires, water conservation and climate change, can influence actions taken to protect and restore the environment. These actions may be undertaken by individuals, governments, non-government organisations or industry, and may include the development of policy initiatives, public campaigning, petitions, membership of environmental groups, volunteering and donations. Individuals can also demonstrate concern for the environment by undertaking personal environment protection activities, such as recycling and reducing electricity and water consumption. (ABS 2010)

Today, governments at each level play significant roles in heritage protection, underpinned by legislated responsibilities, but generally also including some aspects of advocacy and community participation and education.

For example, *Victoria's Heritage: Strengthening our Communities* (Heritage Victoria 2006) illustrates the breadth of government's involvement in heritage stretching from the statutory roles shaped by legislation (listing, protecting, permitting, compliance) through to grants to support owners/managers, interpretation, and heritage education. The headline "strengthening our communities" strongly suggests that the government sees the role of heritage as intimately connected to community wellbeing.

The scope of government participation has changed dramatically over the last 40 years – a period in which governments at all levels around Australia have become increasingly involved in heritage and environmental protection, recognising that such interventions are essential to ensure the survival of what the Productivity Commission called "community-demanded heritage services" (Productivity Commission 2006: 219).

DEFINING COMMUNITY

When we use the word 'community' what do we mean and what expectations are embedded in the term itself?

Communities come in all shapes and sizes – large, small, defined, informal. At one level we are all the community, and heritage actions that serve the 'public good' serve us all.

Communities also exist at all geographic scales: the word 'community' is often used to mean the people who live/work in a specific locality, town, city, region. Such communities are just whoever is there. They are not deliberative constructs.

Community organisations are created to serve mutual purposes and achieve common goals. Community organisations – as distinguished from government organisations – are an indicator of community interests, desires and frustrations. Changes in such organisations over time are an indicator of changing attitudes, values, and knowledge, perhaps localised but potentially societal.

Commercial organisations – businesses – are equally created for mutual benefit. Commercial interests express both pro and anti heritage perspectives, depending on the consequences for the interests of heritage activities. Land development activities (mining, agriculture, urban housing, land subdivision) generally see heritage as a problem, whereas the tourism sector would often (but not always) see heritage as an opportunity.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED 'HERITAGE'?

Heritage values are one amongst a set of competing values: social, economic and cultural.

Values are the subject of much discussion in contemporary society. In this post-modern, post-ideology, post-nation-state age, the search for values and meanings has become a pressing concern. (GCI 2000:1)

Once regarded as clearly defined by stable societal norms, heritage is today a 'fluid phenomena'. In a seminal publication on *Values and Heritage Conservation*, it is argued that in the last generation, cultural consensus and norms have been replaced by an atmosphere of openly contentious and fractious cultural politics. Today heritage needs to be seen as politicized and contested. On the other hand, the author points to other writers who argue that heritage is still imbued with some 'universal, intrinsic qualities' and that however cultural heritage is defined, 'the need for access to one's culture, one's heritage crosses all cultures and contributes to human flourishing and happiness' (Avrami 2000: 6-7; Jensen in Avrami 2000: 7).

Looking at the nature of heritage debates in Australia, the view presented by Pearce (in Avrami 2000:7) seems to hold sway:

The notion of cultural heritage embraces any and every aspect of life that individuals, in their variously scaled societal groups, consider explicitly or implicitly to be part of their self-definition.

Examples abound and some are given below.

A 2006 research project sought to understand the meaning of heritage to Australians, resulting in some interesting findings for the broader community as well as for three sub-groups – young people, recent migrants, and Indigenous Australians. In summary:

- Heritage is a broad concept, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects and existing at every level – personal through to national
- Heritage needs to be protected, and in fact the definition of heritage is partly the ‘things we value and want to protect – much like the AHC’s ‘things we want to keep’ slogan
- Heritage is part of shared identity as Australians, representing what we are and what makes us distinctive (resonating with the ‘national estate’ concept too)
- Heritage is also quite fundamental, underpinning who we are: in the words of a quoted participant it is ‘like a base for a lot of beliefs’ and may therefore be a domain in which people expect to see government action
- Heritage is recognised as something that everyone should ‘be able to seek to protect the things that matter to them’ (McDonald 2006: 4-5, 7).

From the perspective of town planning, Conroy recognises heritage as a highly contested field. She writes that the complexity of identifying which places should be retained for future generations inevitably creates a contest between different values – and it is not just the heritage values themselves that are contested. She notes the difficulties of assigning definitive meanings for heritage value and significance, and that these values are highly mutable, creating changing community expectations (Conroy in Thompson 2007).

Such ideas are not confined to academic realms. In the Panel report on the *Ballarat Planning Scheme Amendment C58 – Heritage Amendment*, the Panel comments on the expansion of the concept of cultural significance, noting that the proposed Amendment is an example “of the outcomes that the expansion in the concept of cultural significance and the growth in community expectations about heritage planning and protection are having” (Planning Panel 2004:7).

The Panel considered what might constitute local heritage significance, what community expectations are with respect to heritage conservation and how these may differ from heritage significance established by using the AHC criteria, recommending a review of the criteria in relation to community expectations (Planning Panel 2004: 21, 23).

Likewise the Panel refers to *Melbourne 2030*, the key State government policy document that guides the development of the greater Melbourne area which again highlights the complexity of defining heritage today: Policy 5.2 on cultural identity, neighbourhood character and sense of place proposes to “reinforce the sense of place of areas by emphasising, amongst other things: heritage values and built form that has resonance for the community”. Protecting heritage places and values is covered by Policy 5.4. It recognises that heritage places ‘offer a way of experiencing the heritage and unique cultural identity of the people who live in a region’ and proposes initiatives designed to gain consistency in the definition of heritage, the assessment of development proposals, offering guidance to local government and ensuring that planning schemes reflect the full extent of heritage values in each municipality. The need for and

expression of the two different approaches to ‘what is heritage’ illustrates changing understandings.

And as another example, Lennon notes that in South Australia there is now ‘increasing community interest in urban character, that is, an interest in heritage beyond what is recorded in state and local heritage registers’ (EPA South Australia 2003, p. 16, in Lennon 2006: 7).

Within the heritage domain itself, heritage values are a regular subject of professional discussion, with criteria, their application and the resultant statement of significance often highly contested in listing processes before local and state heritage councils, and in relation to change before planning tribunals. The debates are between experts, between property owners and listing authorities, and between communities and everyone else.

Values and Heritage Conservation proposed that an important need in the heritage domain was for “research that explains how conservation is situated in society – how it is shaped by economic, cultural and social forces and how, in turn, it shapes society” recognising that such research will “better integrate conservation in the social agenda” (Avrami 2000: 6). Arising from this earlier work on values, the Getty Conservation Institute is now exploring consensus building methods for application in conservation.

Are these challenges in the very definition of heritage and identity – seen from both an academic and a practical perspective – at the heart of one of the challenges that governments’ face in meeting community expectations? Is our legislation and policy (and perhaps some community/commercial attitudes) stuck in an old paradigm where heritage is seen as a fixed, technically determined value – whereas the community expects (perhaps demands) a wider and more fluid reading.

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OF GOVERNMENT

When and why do ‘communities’ look to government in relation to heritage? And when they do, what do they expect?

For example: people may look to government to ‘look after our interests’; ‘protect our heritage’; ‘fund or help us do what we want to do’; ‘prevent something bad happening’; ‘make better rules/laws’; ‘take a leadership role’; ‘get out of the way’ etc.

How and when communities look to government will depend on many factors within that community (past experience, familiarity with government, etc) as well as on their view of the likelihood of government to address their needs. And their expectations will be influenced by their particular interests – so a group of property owners may see a benefit or a disbenefit in heritage listing – their expectations of due process will be influenced by their interests.

And what of particular groups within the community whose views are less likely to be expressed – recent migrants, people in rural areas, Indigenous Australians for example? How might their expectations be expressed? And will they be heard?

Alternatively, when do governments fail in the eyes of the community? Are there particular circumstances or particular issues? How important is “failure to deliver” on a promise, no matter

what the promise? Or are many government “promises” unknown and therefore unexamined, with only the promises of direct concern to a community likely to be checked for failure or success?

And are there more fundamental and perhaps unarticulated expectations of government? Things like honesty, integrity, good governance that are so fundamental an expectation that they go unarticulated but can nevertheless be a field for disappointment.¹

(Possible ways to examine this will be considered in Section 7).

From the perspective of government, how can community expectations be understood, measured and examined. Community expectations are diverse, changeable, complex and layered – like communities and values.

SURVEYS OF COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

In 2005, The Allen Group examined community heritage values within a three part framework: first, individual perceptions (better known as willingness to pay), second the value derived from social interaction (that is ability to enhance social capital and community welfare) and third, intrinsic value (that is its value independent of any public evaluation – this concept forms part of the Australian Natural Heritage Charter’s suite of values). Their work focused on ‘individual perceptions’ value, dividing it into direct use, indirect use and non-use components. It revealed a stronger positive response to two values considered to be ‘existence values’: *heritage is part of Australia’s identity* (92%) and the *historic houses in my area are an important part of the area’s character and identity* (80.2%) compared to direct use values (The Allen Group 2005: viii).

The Allen Group also considered the potential use of values derived from social interaction, noting some interesting and important points about the ways in which heritage places help build social capital by serving well-defined social purposes: community stability and cohesion, aesthetic appreciation, spiritual and symbolic connections, vibrant local culture, a ‘sense of place’ (The Allen Group 2005: 8-9).

Another element of The Allen Group survey examined satisfaction with the level of current action to ‘protect historic heritage across Australia, with an overall result of ‘too little’ (62%) and ‘about right’ (32%; few thought ‘too much’ was being done (The Allen Group 2005: viii). Explored further through a technique described as ‘choice modelling’ those surveyed supported an increase in the number of historic places protected, an increase in the proportion of historic places that are in good condition and an increase in the proportion of historic places that are accessible to the public. Each proposition was tested against specific financial imposts. Further an increased level of development control was supported, with the change described as moving from ‘demolition permitted’ to ‘substantial modifications permitted – but no demolition’ (The Allen Group 2005: ix-x). Interestingly this aligns somewhat with the “Save Our ...” campaigns where often it is the complete loss of heritage places that are the subject of intense protest.

¹ IAP2 frameworks propose for example that participation “promises” should be clearly articulated so that there are no misunderstandings. Such promises should embody any givens.

The Deakin survey in 2006 also explored whether enough was being done to protect heritage, concluding that most people felt that 'not enough' is done to protect heritage, that Australia has been 'tardy in recognising and understanding our heritage' and that it is 'regrettable that it has taken time for Australians to value what is Australian and recognise what needs to be protected for the future'. The core values are what needs to be protected, allowing that places change over time; and that natural heritage is the most vulnerable and least able to be fixed if damaged or destroyed (McDonald 2006: 5-6, 8).

USING INDICATORS

The State of the Environment process, now well established at Commonwealth level and in some states offers a different perspective on expectations, reflecting the now widely accepted processes of policy and program evaluation against indicators using specifically commissioned or existing and available data. At Commonwealth level the core indicators are knowledge of heritage (listings, studies etc), physical condition and integrity of heritage (a sample of places), responses to conserve heritage (funding, legislative improvements), expertise and skills for managing heritage (courses, enrolments, membership of peak bodies, training for volunteers, people employed in heritage), and community awareness.

The SOE for 2011 is currently underway, so the latest report on natural and cultural heritage is 2006. It offers a number of interesting observations about the expectations of the community, noting that while over the last 30 years there have been major advances in heritage practice across Australia:

... the relationship between community awareness and heritage conservation, as reported regularly in the media, remains locked in clichéd time warps and simplistic single-issue causes. (Lennon 2006: 2)

She proposes a more proactive approach and improvements to processes (Lennon 2006: 3), in essence a rational planning solution. Can this approach address the complexities and mutabilities of heritage values, contested and highly politicized?

RESHAPING LEGISLATION

To what extent does heritage legislation and associated regulations meet community expectations? Is compliance with legislation enough, or does the community expect more of both government and commercial enterprises?

In the Ballarat Planning Amendment panel report for example, the panel members spend considerable effort on comparing the state-wide legal requirements contained in the planning practice note with community expectations, and recommend a review of the law based on their professional judgement.

But what then actually prompts the government to undertake such a review? More professional advice? Activated public opinion? A minister keen on reform?

In the Northern Territory, the government has been reviewing the *Heritage Conservation Act 1991* on the basis that it fails to meet the expectations of Territorians about the types and range of

places that are 'heritage' and therefore warrant government action to protect them. To quote the review:

Although the Heritage Conservation Act is theoretically broad in scope, in practice it has proven unable to protect some important heritage places. Territory icons such as Hotel Darwin, the old Supreme Court building and some WWII sites have met with a bulldozer despite opposition from the community. Furthermore, the current Act limits Indigenous heritage to archaeological sites 'pertaining to the past occupation by Aboriginal people', despite the fact that Aboriginal history did not end with the coming of Europeans. It is a continuing story that large numbers of Indigenous people live in the major towns, have a history and have other stories to tell.

Few places that reflect a concern for the protection of natural heritage have been listed. In a landscape still supporting an ancient culture that emphasises the inseparability of place and people, the manner in which culture and the natural environment have shaped and continue to shape each other has not been captured in criteria for listing of heritage places." (REF)

Legislative change is a difficult and lengthy process. The NT legislation review has only just (in August 2011) turned into a bill before Parliament. Do communities expect too much when they want the law changed?

MANAGING PUBLIC PLACES

The Productivity Commission report examines community expectations of the public authorities that own some of the places that have 'played a central role in the community's development and there in establishing its historic identity' and 'as the focal point of historic events ... may continue to embody important cultural values which uniquely define that community' (Balderstone in Productivity Commission: 185; PC 186).

In quoting from 'a leading Australian expert on public sector accounting' the view is strongly put that 'these assets belong to the nation as a whole rather than the government. They are the people's assets, managed and controlled by government on behalf of its citizens. The government is expected to maintain, protect and preserve these assets for the benefit of future generations and not allow them to be degraded' (Barton 1999 in PC: 207). Representations by community advocates including the ACNT and noted that government stewardship of historic heritage fell far short of this standard, with many places on the *Endangered Places List* in public ownership (PC : 182).

Moreover, the expectation is not just good stewardship, but leadership 'as exemplars of conservation practice' was sought by ACNT, and this role acknowledged by some Australian governments in the Productivity Commission submissions (PC: 186); examination of Commonwealth and State government guidelines and strategies on public heritage assets would suggest that this leadership in best practice role is now widely accepted.

Last, there is an expectation that governments will be transparent and accountable in their dealings with historic heritage assets, with communities seeking greater clarity as to which agencies are responsible, better information on expenditure and achievements, and increased accountability. (PC 181) This is a potential area for action in the AHS.

WHAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT EXPECT OF COMMUNITIES?

Typically, government – meaning those engaged within government to develop and deliver policies and services – expect communities to:

- Engage actively with government about new initiatives etc – and at the times and places that are convenient to government
- To behave – not be angry, not protest
- To be consistent in their views
- To be altruistic – consider the views of others not just their own.

Government is often ‘surprised’ when communities: don’t come to consultations and yet protest about the outcomes; fail to be satisfied with the offered solution; are endlessly persistent about their views, values or knowledge. Compliance and cooperation appear to be highly valued by government.

Government also expects communities to get involved: for example, government wants participation in when it seeks to consult on new plans, policies or programs. Hand-on programs also require active volunteer engagement – for example, Hands-On Heritage, Landcare etc - although government usually invests in staff to support volunteer involvement.

From a government perspective, communities can contribute to heritage through:

- Knowledge: knowledge of places based on experience, long connection, active research (etc)
- Values: some heritage criterion are based on community-held values, meaning the input of “associated communities” is essential, but moreover communities (the Australian community in whole or its parts) is the source of meanings for heritage places
- Managers and occupiers of places: for example, committees of management for an historic building, or a local group using a building as a museum.
- Custodians or carers: for specific places often associated with a use or management responsibility or as a Friends group, or as carers for the broader environment such as Landcare and the like.
- Interpreters: as interpreters of natural and cultural history through guiding, writing, promotion (etc).

Are these roles actively recognised and valued by governments?

Such roles represent the likely types of roles one might expect in any area of government work. But is there something that makes heritage distinctive as an area of policy and action? In two areas – knowledge and values – community contributions may be considered vital to the ability of government to achieve ‘heritage assessments’. In general, it seems likely that ‘heritage’ is an area in which co-operation is seen as fundamental or at least highly desirable.

VALUES & KNOWLEDGE

Associated communities are those that hold values and knowledge vital to understanding the significance of a heritage place. Such 'communities' or 'cultural groups' may be united by shared experience, ethnicity, beliefs or traditions, and may also have cultural responsibilities for a place and may be its custodians: e.g. traditional Aboriginal owners; appointed custodians of religious places etc.

Nationally, two heritage criteria - (e) and (g) - refer to community-held values and require methods that engage with these communities so as to understand these values. Communities may also hold knowledge that can assist in the assessment of other values. However, 'community-held' knowledge and values are often largely ignored, with expert assessment dominating. The exception is Aboriginal heritage where the national guidelines – *Ask First* – establish the principle that "indigenous people are the primary source of information on the value of their heritage" (AHC 2002: 6).

The *Australian Natural Heritage Charter and Handbook*, designed as a guide to identifying and conserving places with natural heritage values, recognises that people in a local area may have important knowledge to contribute. But in practice such knowledge may be given little weight. For example, in the comprehensive assessment of National Estate values undertaken for the Regional Forest Agreements, community values and knowledge about 'natural environment' places were revealed through the community heritage workshops process, but were not used as a source of values nor data by those assessing these places (C. Johnston, pers. comm.).

The Commonwealth government's heritage guidelines for agencies suggest that consulting with Indigenous people and the wider community should form part of assessing the heritage values of places, but does not explain how or why (AHC 2010).

Another interesting example is wind farms. The draft National Wind Farm Development Guidelines clearly define processes to identify landscape values held by communities:

The impact of a wind farm on a landscape is not necessarily just visual – other 'values' can be affected. Community values and perception of landscape may include associations, memories, knowledge and experiences or other cultural or natural values ...The central component is working with communities to understand their values of the landscape. Values are held by individuals and communities, and some values reside predominantly in the subjective territory of human perceptions. Therefore a thorough assessment of landscape character and significance, and of the impacts of a wind farm proposal on landscape character, has to include direct community input. (p 70).

And yet community protest over wind farm siting is one of the most protracted and intense debates about landscape heritage values that is occurring across much of Australia today.

Government failure to recognise and acknowledge community-held values and knowledge is a common source of conflict about heritage places, typically leading to protest and resistance. With the potential valuable input able to be offered by communities given limited recognition in the guidelines mentioned above, it may not be surprising that such conflict is common.

Community-based heritage identification processes have been trialled and been successful in achieving recognition of the places valued by communities. Lennon describes a 2004 NSW program where the community nominated 405 icons as heritage places of special importance. Another example in 2002 was where in close consultation with the community, another 600 heritage places were identified, and of these nearly 200 are potential state heritage items (Lennon 2006: 7). Other examples include the National Trust Icons program and the community heritage workshops process developed for and adopted across all the five states involved in Regional Forest Agreement processes. An analysis of the results from the technical studies compared to the community processes revealed that the community held a vast amount of knowledge and a far larger suite of places than was accessible through technical research methods.

COMMUNITY AS VOLUNTEERS

In other domains of activity, government and community are able to work comfortably together.

For example, in the area of mobilising voluntary community resources for hands-on heritage protection works, government plays a significant and supportive role. Landcare which describes itself as a 'national network of thousands of locally-based community groups who care for our country' (<http://www.landcareonline.com.au/about/>) receives significant government funding: 'Australian Government set aside \$189 million for Landcare over five years from the over \$2 billion invested in Caring for our Country ... Landcare encourages collective action by landholders, businesses and communities. This partnership between government and the community is critical to sustainable management of our rural environment and natural resources (<http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare>).

Such partnerships express mutual commitment to shared goals at the national and at local levels, although the partnership occasionally gets shaky when funds are reduced, and community Landcare advocates are not averse to speaking out.

COMMUNITIES SHAPING THEIR OWN AGENDAS

Communities also shape their own agendas, based on their interests, aspirations and needs. Such agendas may align with those of government, or may seek to engage with and gain support from government, while other agendas are clearly constructed in opposition to government and designed to create a policy shift.

Many factors influence how a community will shape its agenda and the position it will 'naturally' take in relation to government.

The agendas of both governments and the community change, reflecting current concerns. Each may feel the challenge of "keeping up" with the agenda of the other; government typically seeks to control the agenda – community to wrest control or redirect. A fiery tango indeed.

Shaping factors will also include the deeper meanings sought from heritage: for example, heritage as a way to connect to culture, identity, sense of place, nature, beauty/aesthetic experiences, commercial opportunities, work (a job), lifestyles, volunteerism etc.

How do agendas differ across communities – urban, rural, Indigenous etc? Indigenous communities are highly focused on protecting and regaining or reconnecting to the heritage of their localities, families, clans and Indigenous Australians more broadly, and ensuring that heritage is lived (McDonald 2006: 10-11). Their focus is strongly linked to economic and social issues (including community wellbeing) and to achieving land justice.

Urban communities are generally thought to be better educated and more articulate, although this is far from universal, and more demanding of governments to act. Rural communities are thought to be more self and local community reliant, and perhaps less likely to believe that governments will look after them. There may be research that has explored these dimensions generally; no specific heritage research was identified in preparing this essay.

HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS: AN INDICATOR OF THE COMMUNITY'S HERITAGE AGENDA?

How can government understand the community's heritage agenda? Especially given the diversity of communities. Are the agendas of heritage organisations a useful indicator?

A quick scan across the decades of community heritage organisations illustrates the changing nature of community-based heritage organisations and their agendas. In the early years of colonial settlement in Australia, the distinctiveness of the landscape, flora, fauna, and Aboriginal culture attracted the interest of learned societies – The Royal Society of Victoria for example. The approach was to study the otherness of this place and its peoples. Today, it is about our connectedness. In a journey of a century and a half, community attitudes and values have changed remarkably, and this is well illustrated in the ways community interests in heritage have been organised.

Contemporary heritage interests – advocacy, protest, hands-on conservation – generally date from the mid twentieth century with the emergence of community interest in historic and Aboriginal places, and natural and wild areas. And following soon after came legislation to address these emerging community concerns and interests, indicating that Australian governments were taking their lead from these newly emerging community values and the active advocacy of equally new community organisations.

The formation of National Trusts around Australia starting in Sydney in 1945, for example, drew attention to the plight of 'historic' mansions at risk of demolition in the post-war construction boom. In 1956, Melbourne's Olympic year the Victorian National Trust was formed; in 1969 the National Trust submitted a draft bill to Parliament seeking protection for historic buildings, but it was rejected (Barr 1978:8). There are parallels in relation to advocacy for the protection of Aboriginal sites and national parks. It took another 5 years before legislation – the Historic Buildings Act was enacted. Others used direct action: the Green Bans started in Sydney in the 1970s saw the Builders Labourers federation, a key construction industry union, successful in preventing the demolition of many significant places.

But while many of the organisations formed in this period remain, agendas have changed. The National Trust is the largest community advocacy group for the heritage of the built environment nationally. The NSW National Trust's *Advocacy Agenda 2011* advocates adaptive reuse and recognises contemporary architecture as potentially tomorrow's heritage. It also looks to

government, not for more legislation but rather for more principled governance within existing legislation and for a firmer hand with commercial interests that seek to exploit legal loopholes.

Heritage protection in NSW had been weakened due to legislative and government administrative changes. Under the *Heritage Act* amendments, owners of significant properties are now allowed to rationalize neglect of listed heritage sites on the grounds of undue financial hardship.

The vast arrays of community heritage organisations that today advocate for protection of natural and cultural places illustrate the increasing breadth of the heritage agenda. Tree-sitting forest protesters represent some of the most dramatic forms of direct action, these days with the union (CFMEU) generally opposing rather than supporting the protesters. Aboriginal organisations are active in heritage advocacy and protest, often defending their traditional country from development, and local communities have spawned multitudes of “Save our ...” groups, focusing on local issues.

For example, a scan of the *Melbourne Age* over the first few weeks of August illustrates this trend.

- In Cockatoo for example, local residents are reported to be defending a now-abandoned kindergarten that served as a refuge during the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires from proposed demolition by their local council. The kindergarten was originally built through community efforts in the 1970s. A Councillor noted the ‘emotional significance’ of the building but rejected its retention on practical grounds, while a local resident rejected the idea of building a new memorial when people were attached to the existing building (The Age 2.08.2011:6).
- Across the city, Brimbank City Council has backed down in the face of community opposition to the sale of a “dozen small but cherished public parks”. The campaign by the Our Parks are Not for Sale group galvanised community activism, surprising the Council with the number of responses it received but ‘not with the depth of feeling; people are very attached to their patches of green’ (The Age, 18.08.2011).

But in the nearby rural town of Yea, the story is reversed with a pensioner claiming that possible heritage listing of her run-down, termite-ridden house will destroy her chance to sell and move to better housing, and the local Mayor saying that the cottage is a significant building in need of protection (The Age, 22.08.2011: 6).

Some recent Aboriginal community examples from The Age include:

- Pilbara-based Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation are in a debate with a mining company and the government over the adequacy of heritage surveys and compensation; senior elder Ned Cheedy said “we are struggling for our land, our people, our culture – hear our voice”. (The Age 14.08.2011: 5)
- In the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Marra people are angry at lack of consultation over another mining project which will impact an island where there are traditional sacred sites with one elder saying – “we will fight, and fight and fight ... this was our sacred place before European time” and with the mining company saying that they preferred this option because it would appear to have the lowest environmental impact, and other options were prohibitive in terms

of cost, adding that they had received “no feedback from traditional owners that they have concerns about the pipeline” (The Age 21.06.2011: 7).

- An example of government and traditional owner alignment, was the report that the Koongarra area would be integrated into Kakadu National Park, despite lobbying by a mining company seeking to have the Australian government withdraw its nomination of the area for World Heritage Listing (The Age 20.6.2011: 3).

These debates set emotion, connection and value uncomfortably against practicality and financials. No wonder governments at all levels and communities despair of finding common ground.

HERITAGE PARTICIPATION: AN INDICATOR OF THE COMMUNITY’S HERITAGE AGENDA?

In the 1985 report *Australia’s National Estate: The role of the Commonwealth*, David Yencken comments that ‘one of the remarkable phenomena of contemporary Australia is the voluntary environmental movement; the number of bodies, the size of their membership, and the diversity of their activities’ (Yencken 1985: 183). He estimated a collective membership of 370,000 in 1981.

No current estimates were found for this essay, however a recent ABS attitudinal survey examined the extent of public involvement in environmental actions designed to influence government behaviour and strengthen support for environmentally concerned organisations. Based on this survey, an estimated 34% of Australian adults were involved in some form of environmental campaign activity in the prior 12 months, with the most common being signing a petition relating to environmental issues (17%), donating money to protect the environment (14%), and expressing concern through a letter, email or talking to responsible authorities (10%). The least common environmental activity undertaken was participating in a demonstration or rally on environmental issues (2%). Volunteering rated around 10%, which is around 540,000 adult Australians (ABS 2010).

In 2006, 1.4% of the population aged 18 years and over, or 207,200 people, volunteered their time within an Arts and Heritage organisation, providing over 30.6 million hours of voluntary work. Around 48% of cultural volunteers undertook voluntary work at least once a week, compared to 40% of the total volunteer population (ABS 2008).

Building volunteerism requires an alignment of values and interests. How can this occur?

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY: AN INDICATOR OF UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS?

Advocacy and protest is surely the most reliable indicator of unfulfilled community expectations of government. Of course, from the ABS figures above, it is clear that most people don’t participate in direct action per se. Petitions are easy to sign and are generally regarded as an unreliable indicator of the strength of community concern. The recent e-petitions (e.g. Get Up) require the signer to take more initiative to access and sign the petition, and perhaps recommend it to others, although the web format makes the communication task easy.

Advocacy comes in many forms, from letters to the editor or to politicians, to starting a campaign, forming a group to campaign and so on. It takes many forms, and there are a range of widely-published resources available (see references).

Advocacy occurs from the most local level where neighbours might band together to protest the removal of street trees, up to the national level. Advocacy may be generated by a specific interest rather than by notions of 'public good'.

Advocacy is not always for heritage conservation. At both national and local levels, some organisations seek to influence government policy in the opposite direction, advocating less heritage recognition and protection. At the local level such campaigns are typically initiated by property owners.

HERITAGE PROFESSIONALS AS A COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

Organisations that represent professionals in the heritage field enable the expectations of these 'professional communities' to be expressed. Examples include Australia ICOMOS, PHA, PIA, RAIA, Engineers Australia, AAA, Museums Australia (etc). The National Trust also has 'expert committees' comprising voluntary professional advisors. Many heritage professionals are engaged by government, as employees, consultants and as representatives on committees and Councils.

The National Cultural Heritage Forum, a group established to provide advice to two Commonwealth Ministers comprised national peak government and non-government bodies. As such it can be considered to provide a distilled expression of community expectations, albeit from a professional and advocacy perspective. Its *Vision for Australia's Cultural Heritage* (2004) offers a set of expectations of governments, including:

- Governments must demonstrate leadership in conserving cultural heritage (through legislation and policies, funds, resources, effective partnerships) – this includes demonstrating best practice towards public heritage assets
- Governments must recognise the values – social, economic and cultural – of heritage and its connection to community well-being
- Governments must monitor cultural heritage – condition, trends and threats and use the monitor as a driver for action
- Governments must engage with the communities that are the 'custodians, knowledge holders and sources of meaning of Australia's cultural heritage'.

Other heritage professional bodies express their expectations of government (and of course of their own members) through their policies and advocacy. For example the RAIA (Royal Australian Institute of Architects) has a heritage policy which defines their expectations of governments:

WHAT GOVERNMENTS NEED TO DO

The listing of buildings and places on statutory heritage registers and planning instruments places obligations on owners with regard to retention and maintenance and so must be allied with

appropriate government assistance. At all levels of government, policies and funding are inadequately delivering the potential benefits to the broader community of heritage conservation initiatives.

The RAI recommends that Governments pursue:

- A more rigorous process for the listing of heritage items. Listing must be based on well researched significance
- The creation of new organisations and processes within the Commonwealth, states, territories and local government to responsibly manage important heritage properties. These may include public/private ventures which secure the property, while enabling effective use, maintenance and a degree of public access. Several possible models exist in New South Wales.
- The provision of adequate funding and tax incentives for important buildings and places
- Increased funding for the provision of adequate training for heritage conservation, specifically for architects
- The involvement of appropriately skilled architects in relevant decision-making regarding the conservation of listed heritage buildings and places.

Another relevant organisation is Museums Australia, a national non-profit body representing the museums sector and committed to promoting museum sector development, articulating ethical standards, facilitating training, advancing knowledge, addressing issues, and raising public awareness. Museums Australia considers that “governments and communities share responsibility to support and resource the conservation and communication of the nation’s heritage”. Embodied in its mission statement is an appreciation of the need for a combination of partnership with government plus advocacy and access to government to enable it to “constructively influence policy”. Specific issues include equity of access and opportunity.

ALIGNING EXPECTATIONS

SUMMARISING EXPECTATIONS

From the very eclectic gathering and analysis of material presented above, it seems apparent that neither communities nor governments always meet the expectations of the other. The times of alignment and a close dance are rare, although enjoyed. More commonly it is a bit of a tussle.

Looking at the areas of community expectation identified, it is apparent that:

- Communities value heritage highly and see it as part of a broader expression of Australian identity and culture: this appears to be an area of general alignment.
- Communities want their ‘heritage’ – that is, what they define as important - to be acknowledged and respected: this is a highly conflicted area.
- The concepts of heritage are continuing to change and expand: the government appears to be lagging behind the community in definitions of heritage, in dividing heritage into separate

categories that do not align with community perceptions and in limited recognition of and protection for a broader range of heritage types. This is an area of frustration.

- Communities think that heritage is not as well protected as it should be: it is not clear whether governments agree or not with this position.
- Communities expect to be able to influence the outcomes where these will affect their lives, land, heritage, culture, sense of identity, livelihoods etc.
- Communities are generally willing participants in local heritage projects where they will have a chance to contribute their knowledge and influence outcomes, even in the face of past disappointments.
- Governments are expected to offer leadership, but not to 'gate keep' or close off opportunities that communities want to pursue. Communities look to government to support, encourage, facilitate and advise.
- Communities are disappointed when public heritage places are neglected – they expect a higher level of care for these places: some levels of government may agree, others argue that they face a 'lack of resources' – this appears to be an area where greater alignment could be achieved.
- Communities expect governments to deliver on what they promise: accountability is increasingly required as a part of monitoring government policy, and SOE reporting could assist if better communicated. Better alignment may be assisted by community-based monitoring and reporting.
- Communities expect to be treated with respect: this is an area neglected by governments which leads to distrust and reluctance by communities to engage, share, trust etc.
- Communities expect good governance – honesty, ethical behaviour, truth, accountability: communities appear ambivalent about governments and politicians, finding it hard to get the 'real answer' and are fearful of being swamped by 'spin'.

ARE COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS CHANGING?

Community expectations are clearly changing, and will continue to change. Moreover, communities appear to be more engaged with government and more aware of government processes than ever before. They are less likely to 'leave it to the government to fix' and more likely to become active and campaign for what they want.

New technologies are rapidly changing the opportunities for information sharing and communication between people – and community activism is taking advantage of these changes. Government is a slow adopter, and often not able to respond to quick shifts in community activism. Community activism appears to be increasingly grassroots, and less reliant on organisational infrastructure. Younger generations also appear less interested in creating organisational infrastructure, preferring to use more ad hoc methods of linking together for particular purposes (this would be worth further investigation).

Cultural values and a sense of identity appears to be more important within a 'global world', not less important as some had anticipated. Younger people are interested in heritage, especially 'interactivity' and experiences rather than 'bricks and mortar' conservation for its own sake. New migrants are also connecting to heritage, often with intangible cultural expressions (such as democracy) and with icon places.² Indigenous Australians connect to their own history and family/community stories, but feel that 'mainstream' heritage ignores and excludes them (McDonald 2006: 8-11).

Australia is also witnessing population changes which may put pressure on heritage places, see the loss of traditions and cultures (or their revitalisation), see increased feelings of disconnection or intensify connection to new places etc. Such changes include: an aging community; younger generations with different expectations and tools to fulfil them; booming coastal populations (often retirees); declining rural cities and towns in some areas, but growth in others; increasing inner urban densities as these areas attract new and often younger residents, often as tenants not owners; rapid growth continuing on the edges of many capitals. Monitoring these changes and being alert to their consequences for tangible and intangible heritage seems important.

UNDERSTANDING & INFLUENCING COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Currently governments seek to understand and influence community expectations in many ways:

- By consulting with communities about their aspirations and needs
- Through expert boards and advisory committees where community representation is provided
- Through market research (a relatively recent phenomena in the cultural heritage domain)
- By advancing new policy initiatives, especially as part of election campaigns
- Through promotion, advertising and sometimes 'spin'.

It would be interesting to know to what extent government 'slogans' and 'messages' have influenced public perceptions: for example, 'things we want to keep'; 'strengthening our communities'; 'a future for our past'; 'national estate' and many many more. An examination of government materials such as posters, policy titles, web materials, media announcements, government publications, government advertising (etc) would be interesting.

OPPORTUNITIES & POSSIBILITIES

Recognising that this essay is part of the development of an Australian Heritage Strategy, it seems important to consider how better alignment of expectations could be achieved.

Some topics for 'principles' to guide better alignment could include:

Aligning values: this means articulating values, seeking alignment, debating conflicting values, allowing and supporting diversity.

² Other projects on migration heritage suggest that recent migrants quickly develop place attachments associated with their own migration history and culture, but that these are often outside the current focus of heritage investigations. Examples include the work of the NSW Migration Heritage Centre and the current Victorian Migration Heritage project.

Role definition: understanding and articulating the roles of the players – government, communities, individuals – in all of their diversity. This means accepting that conflict exists and can be uncomfortable. And it means finding ways to seek good outcomes by working through conflict. Clarity about roles, and recognising the legitimacy of government to govern and community to protest is essential.

Clarity of promise: promises made by governments need to be clear, understood and delivered. 'Promise less – deliver more' is a good motto.

Good governance: governments need to practice good governance at all times. It is fundamental.

Partnership: government-community partnerships need to be able to pursue community agendas, not just government agendas, and joint agendas can be framed to recognise that the community can make a real difference to getting involved (in parallel with many environmental partnerships and projects).

Keeping in touch: Governments would benefit from developing ways to keep in touch with community agendas at the national (e.g. the National Cultural Heritage Forum) through to local levels. Methods would need to be developed that were easy and cost-effective. Essentially this means finding ways to listen.

Validating the dance: Democracy needs active citizenship, and inevitably this will lead to dispute. Conflicting perspectives should be valued, and the willingness to offer alternative views should never be dismissed nor denigrated. Understanding underlying interests, values and identities as a way of seeking greater alignment is discussed further below.

FINDING NEW FRAMEWORKS

Two frameworks are suggested as worthy of consideration:

- Consensus building
- Public participation.

Consensus building

The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) is currently exploring ways of bringing consensus building approaches into heritage conservation practice, recognising that:

In their efforts to preserve and protect cultural heritage paces, managers, planners and other decision makers frequently face a range of conflicting values, priorities and authorities, as well as clashes arising from cultural differences (GCI 2009:1).

From the ground covered in this short essay, conflict is also experienced by communities and community organisations, often combined with substantial power imbalances.

From the GCI perspective, this work will contribute to their long-term focus on the values and significance of cultural heritage. It is expected that the GCI will publish case studies, methods and guidelines over the next few years with the aim of building the resources and skills of heritage professionals.

The GCI is working with the Consensus Building Institute, a not-for-profit US organisation dedicated to the achievement of better agreements based on the 'mutual gains approach' to negotiation. In this work they are seeking to recognise the main sources of heritage disputes and to refine existing analytical tools and consensus building methods.

A key part of their analysis is to consider interests, values and identities. Each of these three concepts has a specific meaning:

- **Interests:** meaning the underlying desires or needs that individuals and groups aim to achieve
- **Values:** meaning deeply held views about the way the world is or should be (i.e. this is not the same as heritage values)
- **Identities:** labels that members of a group use to name or describe themselves.

Conflict is often characterised by 'positioning', that is fixed stances that parties take. Interests are not positions. Interests underlie positions and by exploring interests, other opportunities may be revealed.

A range of methods are used in the processes of consensus building, depending on the issues. However, in relation to the scope of this essay, it is analysis using these three concepts that may offer a better approach to understanding what underlies expectations and conflicts in particular situations. This could be applied to government, community and other parties. Case studies of particular situations could help build mutual understanding.

Public participation

Increasingly, governments are adopting principles and guidelines about when and how they will engage with communities and stakeholders. One organisation – the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) – is having a remarkable impact with its public participation 'core values', 'participation spectrum' and code of ethics. In Victoria, DSE has developed *Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders*, and this is now widely used across the Victorian government. IAP2 material is now often quoted by local government as the basis of their public participation policies.

Interestingly, the IAP2 spectrum (Attachment 1) is based on explicit goals and a clear 'promise'. It offers a model of clarity that could perhaps be adapted to help government and communities define their relationships in relation to some common heritage activities.

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Attachment 1: IAP2 Spectrum

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fact sheets ■ Web sites ■ Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public comment ■ Focus groups ■ Surveys ■ Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshops ■ Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen advisory committees ■ Consensus-building ■ Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen juries ■ Ballots ■ Delegated decision