

# MANAGING ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

GLOBAL CONTEXT,  
NATIONAL PROGRAMS,  
LOCAL ACTIONS

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EDITORS

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ONE WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY

*Series Editors: Joan Gero, Mark Leone, and Robin Torrence*

## CHAPTER 1

### **Learning to Walk Together and Work Together: Providing a Formative Teaching Experience for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Heritage Managers**

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#### **Aboriginal People, Archaeologists and Cultural Heritage Managers in Australia**

With the recognition of the diversity of rights- and stakeholders in the past, archaeologists and heritage managers are working increasingly to develop programmes that fit the needs of those stakeholders. In the 1970s in Australia, there was little recognition in law or policy of the connection between the academic study of Aboriginal archaeology and the contemporary Aboriginal community. This was particularly the case in southern Australia, where the Aboriginal community was considered, after 200 years of settlement, to have been severed from its traditional roots and indeed from any consciousness of or concern for the long and extraordinary history of Aboriginal occupation of Australia.

The old tribesman of New South Wales and Victoria might as well have been shadows moving in the trees of the 18th century for all the imprint they have left behind. (Stanner 1979)

Heritage legislation (newly written for a number of states in southern Australia) protected 'Aboriginal relics' largely for their scientific or research potential. Even in northern Australia, where Aboriginal traditional culture and land and site association was startlingly apparent in contemporary life, there was a tendency to seek and to protect those elements of traditional life and archaeological evidence that was considered to be significant for research (Sullivan 1996).

By the end of the 1970s, this began to change. The initial aims of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (later the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) reflected the prevalent priorities of research as outlined above, but quite quickly, under the

leadership of Bob Edwards and then Peter Ucko, the Institute began to sponsor research into protection programmes for 'sites of significance' – that is, places whose major significance was their importance to Aboriginal people. Parallel with this development was the establishment of Aboriginal heritage agencies in the states and territories, with legislative control of Aboriginal sites albeit with the legal aim, almost solely, of protecting these sites for scientific research and for tourism.

The conjunction of these two developments reflected a gradual but profound change in the practice of Australian archaeology. Early work in New South Wales is a good example of this. In New South Wales, all Aboriginal sites with material evidence of pre-1788 occupation were protected by law and administered by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), though at that time there was no protection at all for sites that did not display archaeological evidence. In 1976 the New South Wales Aboriginal Relics Committee – an advisory committee to NPWS consisting largely of academics and public servants with no Aboriginal representation – took the then-remarkable step of mandating that the agreement of appropriate contemporary Aboriginal communities should be sought about any decision to investigate, damage, or destroy any Aboriginal sites in New South Wales. An early example of this was consultation with the local contemporary Aboriginal community about the World Heritage Site of the Willandra Lakes in Western New South Wales where significant 40,000-year-old human remains had been discovered. This crucial step recognised the custodianship by contemporary Aborigines of all sites associated with their history and culture including 'prehistoric' sites not previously known to them. Shortly thereafter, the committee dissolved itself to make way for the appointment of an ad hoc committee with a majority of Aboriginal people.

At the same time a specific programme – the Sites of Significance Survey – was launched by NPWS with funding from the Institute. The team, consisting of an Aboriginal site officer and an anthropologist, began visiting Aboriginal communities in New South Wales and specifically recording and protecting sites and landscapes identified as being of traditional or contemporary importance (for more detailed discussion of these developments, see Kijas 2005). These first policies and programmes were modest, long overdue, and to an extent conducted below the radar of official notice or recognition. They were limited in terms of the consultation methodology, with many cross-cultural issues and misunderstandings, and could not, with the prevailing mores and conditions of the time, fully and adequately empower Aboriginal groups. There was also a danger of disempowerment in the developing model of community consultation in archaeological

projects revolving around issues of cultural appropriation and control, as well as continued lack of full recognition of the values of sites and landscapes other than for their archaeological research (Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland 2001; Greer 1996).

However, these programme in New South Wales and other states contributed greatly to the process of the recognition of Aboriginal custodianship of Aboriginal cultural sites and of an enthusiastic traditional and contemporary cultural revival in the Aboriginal communities of southern Australia. The initially forced involvement of archaeologists with the Aboriginal community has created a genuine recognition in the archaeological community of issues of obligation and ownership of cultural property and decisions about it, which has become a key feature of Australian archaeology (McBryde 1985; Macfarlane 2005; Sullivan 1985). Overall we have seen a gradual change in the balance of power between Aboriginal people and archaeologists, to a lesser extent between Aboriginal people and heritage managers. Aboriginal communities now expect to be fully involved in such research and its outcomes and for archaeologists to demonstrate the relevance of archaeological research to heritage conservation, cultural continuity, and community issues and aspirations. Equally these communities expect heritage managers to respond to their needs and aspirations. Many Aboriginal communities have their own cultural heritage officers and programmes and are actively involved in heritage investigations and conservation (see Byrne 1996; Colley 2002; Davidson et al. 1995; Kijas 2005; Sullivan 1996, among others for descriptions and analyses of the problems and achievements of this period).

During this period of change, Sandra Bowdler (1983) looked forward to a new future for archaeology and Australia when she urged:

Let us have a living archaeology in the fullest sense of the term... not sterile stamp collecting, crossword puzzling of interest only to ourselves. Let us come to terms with the living Aboriginal presence, and in so doing, help the general public to also do so.

More recently, as outlined by many writers, this proposition has begun to be fulfilled in Australia. Community archaeology is a good example of this, and a significant change from the archaeological models of the 1970s and 1980s. Community archaeology, rather than simply incorporating community consultation, as an initial premise explores with the Indigenous community the uses and implications of archaeology in their context and focuses on the involvement of local people in the investigation of their past. It turns the emphasis and priority of the archaeological process around so that the concerns and wishes of the community, and aspects of their mode of intellectual inquiry and

interpretation of the past, are an integral part in the research design and methodology of the project. (For a full description of community archaeology see Greer et al. 2002 and other articles in Marshall 2002). Similar methodologies have been devised for heritage conservation projects in Aboriginal communities. Even when archaeological projects are not explicitly community archaeology, they invariably incorporate many of the elements of community archaeology as outlined by Moser et al. (2002).

### **The Issue: Bridging the Communication Divide**

Despite this progress, Aboriginal communities still face significant difficulties in caring for their heritage or indeed asserting their custodianship of it. There has been a growth of heritage management assistance offered by cultural heritage managers and involvement with the community by archaeologists pursuing their research. However, increasing contact has demonstrated clearly that partnerships between Aboriginal people and archaeologists or heritage managers has many practical issues and problems even with the best will on both sides. Little effective mentoring or training is available to most communities to assist them to carry out effective heritage conservation. There is often a lack of effective communication. Archaeologists and heritage managers do not automatically know how to work with Aboriginal people and often lack cultural sensitivity and knowledge of traditional heritage practices as well as a practical and realistic understanding of their issues and problems. The archaeologists and heritage managers tend to dominate discussion and decision-making processes while Aboriginal people often find the 'experts' to be puzzling, impractical, and opaque. Their previous experience with researchers and government officials has made Aboriginal people wary, and because of their marginalisation in education, social, and political systems they are often unaware of the legal situation, of the way bureaucracies work, and of available support systems. This often means frustration and failure for their efforts.

During the 1980s there was increased pressure on the staff of National Parks and World Heritage Sites to manage cultural as well as natural heritage and in particular the need to include Aboriginal people in mainstream decision-making. Traditionally, park management organisations had concentrated their recruitment on staff with natural heritage expertise. As a result, increasingly managers of these areas struggled to deal with the unfamiliar and often intimidating problems of managing cultural heritage at a time when Aboriginal people were seeking more robust engagement.

Traditional modes of education used to teach archaeology and heritage management have often been inaccessible, uninviting, and inappropriate for Aboriginal people. Attempts at flexible approaches, such as the distance education courses for Aboriginal site curators trialled at Charles Sturt University in the 1980s, struggled as students were isolated from their teachers, the courses relied too heavily on literacy skills, and a supportive home and work environment was presumed (Morrissey 1984). Generally, Aboriginal people find it immensely difficult to obtain appropriate training within institutions for which Western science and archaeological practice is privileged. Aboriginal people have been encouraged to 'participate' in heritage management and training programmes, but the status and validity accorded to Aboriginal knowledge and perspective about the past has been at the best equivocal (Upcher 1996). As described by one of the longest-serving Aboriginal heritage managers in New South Wales: 'Some of us can't afford to come to university to study. The best way to learn these things is out in the field where the sites are' (Bates 1995).

It was in response to these issues that we began to offer short heritage management courses to Aboriginal communities, at the same time using these courses to train young Aboriginal site officers and archaeology graduates in real-life settings (see also, Chávez, this volume). Our aim was to provide the participants, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, with the basic principles of heritage management in such a way as to make it relevant and helpful to the local community. There have been other significant bonuses. One of the outcomes of the heritage management course has been to suggest a way to address the communication problems discussed above. Managers of protected areas became important clients for the course, and the course worked actively to bridge the gap between approaches and skills for natural and cultural heritage management. While the course concentrates on developing confidence for indigenous cultural heritage values conservation, one of the core ethics of the course is the need to recognise, respect, and manage for all the significant values of a place as determined in the principles of the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2000) and the Australian Natural Heritage Charter for the Conservation of Places of Natural Significance (Commonwealth of Australia 2002).

### **The Heritage Management Training Course**

In 1994 the Australian Heritage Commission began developing a training programmes designed to give Aboriginal site officers and young graduate archaeologists and cultural heritage managers direct experience working on site with Aboriginal communities and of the

complex practical and political problems of site management. This fulfilled needs in both areas – for graduates experience with a high level of vocational relevance and for those already employed a professional development opportunity not previously available in a formal sense.

The basic format of the training programmes was designed around the personal experience of Sharon Sullivan in delivering programmes on rock art site management in the United States for the Getty Conservation Institute. Some aspects of Sullivan's work were in turn based on the community heritage courses developed in New South Wales as a result of the Sites of Significance Survey conducted by Ray Kelly and Howard Creamer. Ironically, the Australian experience was being refined and exported at a time when such a programme was not yet generally available in Australia. The Australian Heritage Commission initiative developed the model further in concept, methodology, and application. The result is a two week on-site intensive programme that places course participants in the challenging real-life situation of developing a management plan at the request of the local Aboriginal community, for a place or part of a place recognised to have cultural heritage values.

Since that time, four major programmes have been delivered – at Carnarvon Gorge in Central Queensland, in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in North Queensland, and twice at Uluru–Kata Tjuta World Heritage Area in the Northern Territory. After the first course was held in 1994, the Australian Heritage Commission sought a university partner to help deliver the course and provide the formal assessment and accreditation that course participants were seeking. James Cook University included it within its Masters in Cultural Heritage Studies programmes. The course was naturally compatible with the university programmes as the masters' was taught in intensive blocks, making it available to students nationally. The course was a unit of the masters' programmes and was also used as vocational training or as part of a broader programme of study.

The course typically involves about twenty-five participants, made up of Aboriginal site officers or community-nominated Aboriginal people from throughout Australia, postgraduate anthropology and archaeology students from James Cook University, and young archaeologists and cultural heritage managers working in government agencies. Invitations for Aboriginal participants are sought through Aboriginal networks and regional associations, by word-of-mouth contact with state agencies, and personal and agency contacts. There is always an oversupply of applicants. A complex patchwork of funding for participant's travel and support needs are negotiated with various authorities and funding bodies.

Over two weeks, participants and community leaders, along with key stakeholders, work through the processes of developing an outline conservation or management plan for a selected site or group of sites. The course consists of lectures and research and practical work on-site such as significance assessment, physical condition assessment, and development of realistic solutions to problems and issues. During the two weeks, participants are also asked to present to the whole group a case study from their own community or relevant work based on a specific site or management issue. The course concludes with the development of an outline plan and its presentation to community elders and other key stakeholders, who provide feedback and comment (Figure 1.1).

The course requires intense preparation. It is crucial to find an Aboriginal community that has expressed a clear need for some heritage research and planning and is willing and able to host the course. This necessitates several site visits to the prospective location, and often prolonged discussion and negotiation, including working with the community to choose a specific site that both meets their needs and those of the participants. Complex logistical issues of accommodation, food, equipment and transport, occupational health and safety matters, insurance, special needs, and the like – often in remote areas – also



Figure 1.1 Heritage management students interviewing Uluru manager.



need to be addressed thoroughly. Background research and gathering of all available material about the subject area is undertaken by the course coordinators in association with some of the key stakeholders. This material, both written and oral, forms an important element of the participant's research into significance and issues at the site. The success of the process rests on the quality and thoroughness of all this preparation.

The specific location and site chosen relate to a range of values and issues that are demanding of attention. The course focuses on a location where there was a good chance that the outcome could be used in a practical manner by the Aboriginal community and relevant management agencies.

At Carnarvon National Park in Central Queensland, the Queensland National Parks Service wished to support the park's traditional owners (who were scattered across a range of communities in central Queensland), to re-engage in an ongoing connection and custodianship role for the rich Aboriginal heritage of the park. It was impossible for participants to encompass the management issues for the whole huge park in two weeks, so with the elders we chose to work on a specific rock art site within the park that had not been properly recorded or managed, one which was in danger due to unmanaged visitation from a nearby campground. Focusing on this one site gave us a manageable course objective, but it also gave us the opportunity to explore the site in the wider context of the entire park, to look more broadly at values and issues of the region generally, and to negotiate a stronger engagement between Aboriginal traditional owners and park managers.

At Uluru-Kata Tjuta World Heritage Area in Central Australia in 2002, the choice was a walking track that was one of the prime visitor focuses in the park and which passed a number of rock art and sacred sites. Management concerns included visitor management, weeds, litter, interpretation, and rock art conservation. The park and its traditional owners wanted a more detailed and effective approach to the management of this area and to train more Anangu (local Aboriginal people) to assist directly in the cultural heritage management programmes in the park. The running of these courses at Uluru-Kata Tjuta has led to the development of an Anangu controlled and staffed cultural heritage plan and unit in the park (Figure 1.2).

The planning methodology used in the course is based on the essential logic of the Burra Charter, which involves relevant background research on the site, identification of all the elements of its cultural significance, and an assessment of all its conservation and management issues. This is followed by an analysis of these elements to provide a set of policies and strategies that led to the conservation of all the

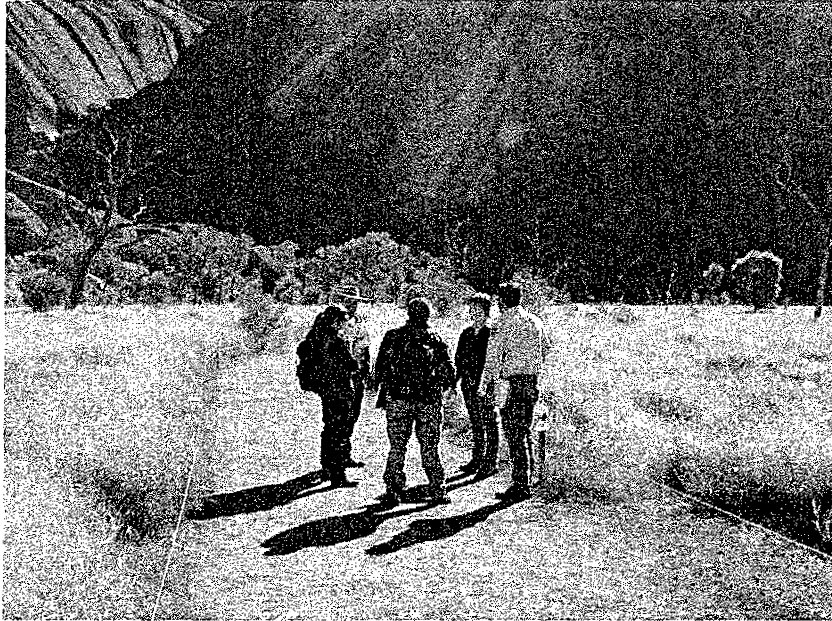


Figure 1.2 Students on track at Uluru.

site's cultural heritage values. At each stage of the process, the course presenters give informal lectures on various elements of the process using examples from around Australia and overseas. Participants then undertake the particular stage at the chosen site. Results of each stage are analysed progressively by the whole group (including of course the community representatives) and consensus is reached before the next stage is undertaken. In this way, the course realises the need, identified by some (e.g., Allen 2004), for practitioners in training to gain more practical and real exposure to the meanings and values behind the heritage conservation approach.

There are a range of simple techniques and skills practiced which participants can return to their community and use – for instance, basic site observations, appropriate methods of consultation with traditional owners and stakeholders, how to undertake research on-site significance, assessing an area for weeds or fire risk, and designing or conducting simple visitor observations and surveys. We also aim to show participants the major aspects of the technical and policy issues required for site management, but we did not pretend to train them, for instance, in the technical details of field archaeology, or of condition assessment or interpretation planning in two weeks and this was made clear to them. The idea was to expose them to the need for

these techniques and their appropriate uses and to give them enough experience to know how and when to use the expertise available.

At the end of the two weeks, the results of each stage come together to form the key components of a management plan for the site. At the final stage, participants negotiate how to collaborate on bringing together the parts, producing and presenting the results as a plan. Importantly, the course *demystified* the process and content of preparing a management plan/conservation management plan, moving from the realm of something that was done by 'experts' and consultants to something that participants have a genuine understanding of and participated in confidently.

In this process, the role of community elders was crucial. Elders were treated as teachers and clients in the course, and following research analysis and discussion their views and aspirations were the final determining factor. When the participants arrive on site, the first key element is a formal welcome by the community, an introduction to their 'country' (in their way), along with a celebration of some sort that involves the whole community. The participants are introduced to the importance of working within the community's traditions and to the fact that the course produces an outline plan that is of real benefit to our hosts. Traditional owners of the area, often with the host management organisation, formally present the participants with the task of undertaking the plan.

One of the essential ingredients of the course is providing and promoting a context that intentionally blurs the line between a 'training' exercise and a 'real-life' situation. Initially, this complexity can confound or even concern some participants when they realise how serious and real is the situation confronting them. For others, the real life context is exactly how they want to learn, and the level of engagement they bring to the task for the management agency and traditional owners is extraordinary. Working for a real cultural heritage outcome for a particular community aligns the course correctly to recognition and respect for the custodianship of cultural values and puts experts in a supporting/facilitating role, rather than as people with privileged and exclusive access to knowledge (Figure 1.3).

Placing a high value on the role of working in the community context and its implications means that certain practical lessons have to be learned (see also, chapters 11, 12, 15, and 16, this volume). For example, the challenge of working with language and literacy barriers often means it is difficult to get simple answers to the questions you have. It also is important to recognise, respect, and allow for cultural no-go areas and to modify work practices in light of the protocols and norms of the community.



Figure 1.3 Traditional owners preparing a kangaroo for heritage management students.

The style of the course has been informed by the methodologies of participatory planning, as well as by experiential learning in cross-cultural and adult education contexts. Throughout the course, there is an emphasis on teamwork and a series of simple teamwork discussions and exercises promoting collective learning and problem solving. For the duration of the course, participants work in groups of five or six, selected to provide a cross-section of cultures, experiences, and regions. Participants work across skill levels, cultural and gender issues, and recognise people's prior experience, expertise, and cultural differences to produce a feel of 'we are all in this together'. Groups often struggle with this, but they work together for two weeks and learn to balance 'eager beavers' with those that work in other styles.

Choosing the right pace and negotiating what roles people can play are constant challenges for the participants. Course participants are deliberately chosen to represent both young professional (both indigenous and non-indigenous) and Aboriginal community members and heritage officers. The archaeologists and professional site managers in the group tend to put great emphasis on the production

of a good-looking professional product, acceptable to the bureaucracy. They tend to be skilled in a particular verbal and written communication style that has brought them success at university and in the bureaucracy. They need a high degree of order and predictability in their planning and are anxious about achieving a highly ranked outcome in their terms.

Aboriginal community participants and site officers tend to have a more integrated understanding of heritage values and their role in the community. They are more tentative in their decision-making in the sense that they have a higher understanding of the social complexity of some of the issues. They value personal relations within the group, and are less concerned about deadlines and presentation quality. There is an intentional mirroring here of the situation in real life, when professional archaeologists and heritage managers and community elders and site officers will need to work together to achieve a desirable outcome. In the experience of the course organisers, learning to manage yourself and the people you work with and understanding cross-cultural differences and strengths and weaknesses within a group are crucial skills that both Aboriginal community workers and heritage managers need. Such skills are not usually taught at university or experienced in many communities.

Negotiating roles and work both across personal and cultural dynamics can be challenging for participants. In one course, a group had a person with skills in playing the guitar and participated less in technical discussions. In the end the group found the person contributed immensely to the group's spirit and ability to relax and even contributed some sage ideas and insights. He made a great contribution in the role of guitar player and entertainer in their final presentation – to great effect and applause. In another group, the Aboriginal participants acted as skilled policy advisers and reality testers, delegating as much as they could of the report drafting and production and some other technical skills to the university graduates who in turn acted as competent expert consultants to the group.

A crucial element of the course design is the involvement of key stakeholders throughout the process of developing the plan. This aspect also takes careful preparatory consultation. The stakeholders can be defined as individuals or organisations with a custom-made or legal involvement in the site, can contribute information about it, or who can influence its future in some way. At the second course, based in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in Queensland, traditional owners, local government officials, Parks and Wildlife staff, previous researchers, tourism officials, the state heritage agency, and the regional Aboriginal Council were all involved in formal and informal

sessions with the aim of seeking information and consensus regarding significance assessment, key issues, and outcomes.

Key stakeholders may be asked to give a short presentation in the early stages of the course. In steps where participants need the appropriate background information, and most particularly during the step where participants are required to identify issues, they may be interviewed or brought together. This is a part of the course requiring careful planning and management. It is emphasised to participants that understanding the perspective of others and designing appropriate management solutions is one of the keys to successfully managing heritage values, particularly where conflicts can potentially exist over different understandings of the values and the nature of the issues impacting on them. A key role for participants is to deal appropriately and effectively with all these stakeholders; an important skill needed in real life heritage management planning for both community representatives and archaeologists and heritage site managers. This can prove particularly challenging for Aboriginal participants, who may have longstanding issues and resentments against some of the stakeholder groups. Through this process, they learn self-management and strategic thinking and actions to achieve their goals. We found that invariably the hostility and suspicion often initially apparent between participants and some stakeholders dissolves with the respectful and clear communication methodology in which we coach participants. Support of the stakeholders for the process and outcome is often as enthusiastic as that of the participants.

In the course held in the Wet Tropics, a broad group of stakeholders was brought together during consideration of management issues. Participants assisted in the organisation, and a trained facilitator modelled the running of a carefully planned session using a facilitation technique designed to elicit issues in a nonconfrontational way. Course participants followed up the session in small groups with the stakeholders to further understand issues from their perspective. The event was concluded with a barbecue for everyone to interact. Such consultation with stakeholders leads to a much more realistic assessment of issues and possible solutions. For instance, it is the job of the participants, by interviewing the stakeholders and doing other background research, to determine a realistic budget and resources available for the site and to tailor their policies and proposed actions accordingly.

One of the impacts of the course structure is the way in which it is concluded. In keeping with the practical nature and local community commission/endorsement of the work, the participants are made aware that they will be required to present their final plans to a panel of representatives of the Aboriginal traditional owners, management



Figure 1.4 Heritage management students presenting plans of management to traditional owners.

agencies and other key stakeholders. Participants take this aspect of the course very seriously and it leads to a fitting and memorable climax for the course. The draft outline plans for these presentations can be a valuable document which communities can and do use to facilitate improved heritage management at particular sites or groups of sites (Figure 1.4).

### Evaluation of the Approach

Overall, the experience of working with a group of other heritage professionals and indigenous people on a common purpose task, concentrating on professional issues in practice at the interface between the community and management realities, is difficult to gain anywhere else. For some people who go on to be bureaucrats working in national government agencies on heritage policy or community cultural heritage leaders, this experience has proved formative. Many of the Aboriginal participants have gained confidence in their own ability through the course and use this experience as a first step in acquiring tertiary qualifications in cultural heritage management. In the case of the Aboriginal Rangers from Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park, the course was the beginning step

in acquiring a certificate in cultural heritage management from James Cook University. Apart from other benefits of the course, it has enabled promotions of these people to positions within the park staff managing their cultural heritage within this World Heritage Area.

Feedback from participants has been extraordinary. Some participants meeting ten years after taking the course spoke about the course as one of the most positive and influential learning experiences of their professional lives. In particular, participants appreciate the range of management skills and experience, including working with a range of people from different backgrounds and with different skills and approaches that they acquire. They also value an insight into the workings of experts, government, the private sector, and the community and learn how to deal with them. They are empowered by coming to understand the range of relatively simple actions that can make a difference in effective heritage place conservation in the real world. Above all, the course aims to bring to the participants' consciousness the complex range of issues involved – the effect of their own attitude and outlook on these issues and the opportunity and power they have to work toward analysing and solving them.

Some of the issues and problems in running the course are readily apparent. The course needs considerable funding, thoughtful preparation, and the commitment of a suitable community group. Because it provides a 'real-life' experience, it can have moments of conflict and high drama as well as times of great satisfaction and successful teamwork. There can be significant cross-cultural and cross-gender issues. Dealing with these issues takes skilled coordination and counselling and a certain amount of risk-management. For the presenters running the course is a twenty-four-hour a day role.

For some of the reasons outlined above it is difficult to run the course on a regular basis. Generally, it needs to run consistently every two years to build up a body of expertise and to inculcate the methodology in new and developing practitioners. Since the course was introduced, some excellent similar courses directed at undergraduates have been developed. Such a course is the field school being coordinated by indigenous archaeologist Dave Johnson for the Australian National University Department of Archaeology and Anthropology – *Indigenous Perspectives in Field Archaeology: Seeing Country through Our Eyes*. The field school has emerged as a result of an identified need by indigenous archaeologists to focus on training for research that addresses Aboriginal community issues (Johnston 2005). This course provides on-site learning about heritage and culture from Mutti Mutti, Njampaa, and Paarkinji elders from the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area (Lake Mungo).



## The Flow-On Effect: Learning and Support Tools for Heritage Management

Since the course was developed, the practicality of the conservation planning methodology has led to a range of associated guides, training programmes, and activities. These follow-on products and meetings have been tremendously successful and influential.

One of the strongest aspects of the course is the ability of the planning methodology to integrate the management of indigenous cultural heritage values with the management of natural and built heritage values in a straightforward way. This had particular appeal to managers of National Parks and other heritage sites that often had complex combinations of natural, indigenous, and historic heritage values. State and local heritage agencies and councils were also calling for guidance on how to achieve more balanced and holistic management of places with a broad range of values and to raise awareness about heritage conservation issues in their staff and constituents.

The demand for a guide to integrate natural and cultural heritage conservation issues led the Australian Heritage Commission to develop *Protecting Local Heritage Places: A Guide for Communities* (Australian Heritage Commission 1998). This guide helped people engaged in local community heritage through information about research, significance assessment, and management. The guide was well received in the community and has won both state and national awards from the Royal Australian Planning Institute. More than 4,500 copies of the guide were distributed nationally (and internationally).

Feedback from the guide demonstrated that people were still seeking a more structured 'how-to' approach to lead them through the process of managing heritage places. This led the Australian Heritage Commission to produce a heritage planning guide closely following the format developed in the Heritage Management Training Course. The *Protecting Heritage Places Information and Resource Kit* presented a ten-step process which led people through producing a management plan for a place, in much the same way that the original course did (Australian Heritage Commission 2001).

The kit's ten steps provides an overview structure linking cultural heritage and natural heritage conservation and is underpinned by the three 'technical' guides for heritage conservation in Australia: the revised *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 2000); the *Australian Natural Heritage Charter* (Commonwealth of Australia 2002) and *Ask First: A Guide to Respecting Indigenous Heritage Places and Values* (Australian Heritage Commission 2002) (Figure 1.5). It was particularly the way the Aboriginal cultural heritage issues were dealt with in an integrated

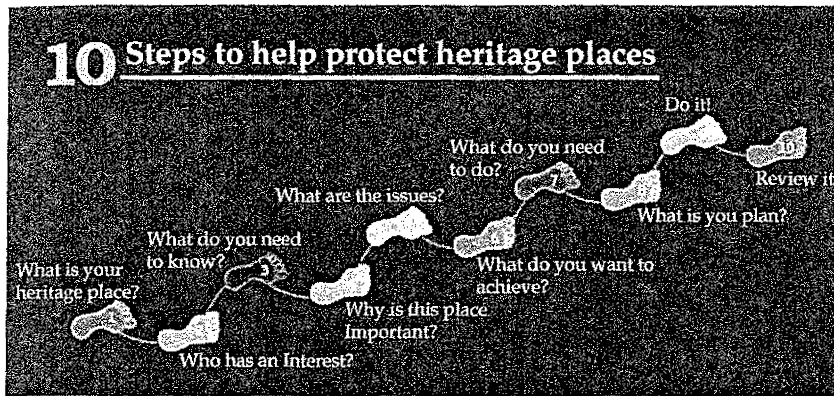


Figure 1.5 Ten Steps to Help Protect Heritage Places, Australian Heritage Commission 2001, Protecting Heritage Places Information and Resource Kit.

fashion with natural and historic values that gained positive praise from both Aboriginal communities and heritage managers.

The *Protecting Heritage Places Kit* is distributed nationally as a reference tool for heritage managers, but has also been delivered through local government associations as practical on-site workshops with heritage managers leading people through the ten-step process applied to a local heritage site or issue. These workshops proved most popular with indigenous groups seeking to gain confidence and skills themselves to manage their own heritage places. However, the methodology advocated in the ten-step approach is equally applicable in any community, indigenous or non-indigenous. Small rural communities faced the same issues and problems as many indigenous communities, and the interface between them and the professional historian, archaeologist, or heritage manager can be just as difficult and just as much in need of facilitation.

The ten-step approach has also been developed into an online training course, delivered over thirteen weeks via a consortium of universities that were part of the Open Universities Australia Network.<sup>1</sup> Using the online mode, the *Protecting Heritage Places* course is available to students nationally and internationally. The structure of the programmes mirrored the two-week residential version in content, but of course cannot provide the complete, real-life, and collective experience that is offered in the full course.

As the utility of the process is being recognised, the ten-step methodology is now being used as a practical tool to support heritage managers and Aboriginal people facing issues of tourism management. A publication has been developed to support this work *Steps to*

*Sustainable Tourism: Planning a Sustainable Future for Tourism, Heritage and the Environment* (published by the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage in 2004). Also based on the same approach, *Stepping Stones for Tourism: Tourism Development Program for Indigenous Communities* is a successful participatory planning programmes that supports indigenous communities that wish to work through planning steps to develop tourism products or manage tourism on their lands.<sup>2</sup> As an example, these tools are being used as the basis for a programmes to integrate tourism and heritage planning at one of Australia's World Heritage Areas under joint management with traditional owners, Purnululu (Bungle Bungles) National Park in Western Australia. The *Steps to Sustainable Tourism* publication is being used as the overall guide for tourism planning in the park, while the companion *Stepping Stones for Tourism* approach is being used as a training tool to build understanding in the traditional owners in how tourism operates and how best to manage it in the park.

## Conclusion

The opportunities and approach to provide quality teaching activities and resources for community engagement in heritage management have evolved over time. The integrity and flexibility of the approach initially outlined in the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2000) and advocated in the ten-steps of the Heritage Management Training Course and its descendents only continue to prove the power of the approach to deal with complex heritage management issues. While the approach at first consideration may appear simple, considerable detail can be built into each step if necessary from a technical heritage conservation and planning perspective. And yet its appeal to many – both indigenous and non-indigenous alike – lies in its ability to demystify professional approaches to heritage conservation. Its application in teaching allows an elegantly clear communication and planning structure for training courses, workshops, and community capacity-building projects.

Overall, the course and the approach we advocate through the range of our teaching activities seek to recognise and reflect the influence that Aboriginal people and perspectives have had on cultural heritage management in Australia. These are many and significant, but perhaps one of the most relevant to the way we have approached this work is moving away from a Western standpoint of management as a process of people doing things 'to' country to look after it. In Aboriginal worldviews, the process of managing country and special places within it is more of a two way interaction between people

and country (Bradley 2001). This sense of interaction is related to the concept of *Ngapartji-ngapartji*, a process of reciprocal exchange in a context of responsibility (Wohling 2001) that is practiced by the traditional owners of Uluru where we have held two of our courses. As we have learned in Australia over time and in dialogue with Aboriginal people, the process of management is a creative negotiation between various interests and the country itself. It is recognising the need to learn about and work in this human dimension and place-people nexus that has inspired us in teaching new generations of heritage managers.

## Endnotes

1. The Open Universities Australia Network web site can be found at [www.open.edu.au](http://www.open.edu.au).
2. The participatory programmes, *Stepping Stones for Tourism: Tourism Development Program for Indigenous Communities*, can be found at [www.stepwise.net.au](http://www.stepwise.net.au).

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