

Burra Charter

[Carta de Burra \(Spanish translation\) pdf file](#)

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[Piagam Burra \(Indonesian translation\) pdf file](#)

Review

Background

Australia ICOMOS wishes to make clear that there is but one Burra Charter, namely the version adopted in 1999 and identified as such. The three previous versions are now archival documents and are not authorised by Australia ICOMOS. Anyone proclaiming to use the 1988 version (or any version other than that adopted in November 1999) is not using the Burra Charter as understood by Australia ICOMOS. Initial references to the Burra Charter should be in the form of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999 after which the short form (Burra Charter) will suffice.

Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), the peak body of professionals working in heritage conservation, adopted revisions to the Burra Charter at its Annual General Meeting in November 1999. This followed an extensive process of review with the intention of bringing the with best practice.

The revisions take account of advances in conservation practice that have occurred over the decade since the Charter was previously updated.

Prominent among the changes are the recognition of less tangible aspects of cultural significance including those embodied in the use of heritage places, associations with a place and the meanings that places have for people.

The Charter recognises the need to involve people in the decision-making process, particularly those that have strong associations with a place. These might be as patrons of the corner store, as workers in a factory or as community guardians of places of special value, whether of indigenous or European origin.

The planning process that guides decision-making for heritage places has been much improved, with a flowchart included in the document to make it clearer.

With the adoption of the 1999 revisions, the previous (1988) version of the Charter has now been superseded and joins the 1981 and 1979 versions as archival documents recording the development of conservation philosophy in Australia.

If you have further inquiries about the review process itself, the revised document, or any other issues concerning the Burra Charter please contact:

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The Burra Charter

The Australia ICOMOS charter
for the conservation of places

of cultural significance

Preamble

Considering the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice 1964), and the Resolutions of the 5th General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (Moscow 1978), the Burra Charter was adopted by Australia ICOMOS (the Australian National Committee of ICOMOS) on 19 August 1979 at Burra, South Australia. Revisions were adopted on 23 February 1981, 23 April 1988 and 26 November 1999.

The Burra Charter provides guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance (cultural heritage places), and is based on the knowledge and experience of Australia ICOMOS members.

Conservation is an integral part of the management of places of cultural significance and is an ongoing responsibility.

Who is the Charter for?

The Charter sets a standard of practice for those who provide advice, make decisions about, or undertake works to places of cultural significance, including owners, managers and custodians.

Using the Charter

The Charter should be read as a whole. Many articles are interdependent. Articles in the Conservation Principles section are often further developed in the Conservation Processes and Conservation Practice sections. Headings have been included for ease of reading but do not form part of the Charter.

The Charter is self-contained, but aspects of its use and application are further explained in the following Australia ICOMOS documents:

- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance;
- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy;
- Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports;
- Code on the Ethics of Coexistence in Conserving Significant Places.

What places does the Charter apply to?

The Charter can be applied to all types of places of cultural significance including natural, indigenous and historic places with cultural values.

The standards of other organisations may also be relevant. These include the Australian Natural Heritage Charter and the Draft Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places.

Why conserve?

Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. They are historical records, that are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience. Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious.

These places of cultural significance must be conserved for present and future generations.

The Burra Charter advocates a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.

Article 1 Definitions Explanatory Notes

For the purpose of this Charter:

These notes do not form part of the Charter and may be added to by Australia ICOMOS.

- 1.1** *Place* means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views.
- The concept of place should be broadly interpreted. The elements described in Article 1.1 may include memorials, trees, gardens, parks, places of historical events, urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places.
- 1.2** *Cultural significance* means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.
- The term cultural significance is synonymous with heritage significance and cultural heritage value.
- Cultural significance may change as a result of the continuing history of the place.
- Cultural significance is embodied in the *place* itself, its *fabric*, *setting*, *use*, *associations*, *meanings*, *records*, *related places* and *related* information.
- Understanding of cultural significance may change as a result of new information.

objects.

Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

- 1.3** *Fabric* means all the physical material of the *place* including components, fixtures, contents, and objects. Fabric includes building interiors and sub-surface remains, as well as excavated material. Fabric may define spaces and these may be important elements of the significance of the place.
- 1.4** *Conservation* means all the processes of looking after a *place* so as to retain its *cultural significance*.
- 1.5** *Maintenance* means the continuous protective care of the *fabric* and *setting* of a *place*, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves *restoration* or *reconstruction*. The distinctions referred to, for example in relation to roof gutters, are
- maintenance Ñ regular inspection and cleaning of gutters;
 - repair involving restoration Ñ returning of dislodged gutters;
 - repair involving reconstruction Ñ replacing decayed gutters.
- 1.6** *Preservation* means maintaining the *fabric* of a *place* in its existing state and retarding deterioration. It is recognised that all places and their components change over time at varying rates.
- 1.7** *Restoration* means returning the existing *fabric* of a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.
- 1.8** *Reconstruction* means returning a *place* to a known earlier New material may include recycled material salvaged from other places. This should not be to the detriment of any place of cultural significance.

state and is distinguished from *restoration* by the introduction of new material into the *fabric*.

- 1.9** *Adaptation* means modifying a *place* to suit the existing *use* or a proposed use.
- 1.10** *Use* means the functions of a *place*, as well as the activities and practices that may occur at the *place*.
- 1.11** *Compatible use* means a *use* which respects the *cultural significance* of a *place*. Such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on cultural significance.
- 1.12** *Setting* means the area around a *place*, which may include the visual catchment.
- 1.13** *Related place* means a *place* that contributes to the *cultural significance* of another *place*.
- 1.14** *Related object* means an object that contributes to the *cultural significance* of a *place* but is not at the *place*.
- 1.15** *Associations* mean the special connections that exist between people and a *place*. Associations may include social or spiritual values and cultural responsibilities for a *place*.
- 1.16** *Meanings* denote what a *place* signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses. Meanings generally relate to intangible aspects such as symbolic qualities and memories.

- 1.17** *Interpretation* means all the ways of presenting the *cultural significance* of a *place*. Interpretation may be a combination of the treatment of the fabric (e.g. of maintenance, restoration, reconstruction); the use of and activities at the place; and the use of introduced explanatory material.

Conservation Principles

Article 2 Conservation and management

- 2.1** *Places of cultural significance* should be conserved.
- 2.2** The aim of *conservation* is to retain the *cultural significance* of a *place*.
- 2.3** *Conservation* is an integral part of good management of *places of cultural significance*.
- 2.4** *Places of cultural significance* should be safeguarded and not put at risk or left in a vulnerable state.

Article 3 Cautious approach

- 3.1** *Conservation* is based on a respect for the existing *fabric, use, associations and meanings*. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible. The traces of additions, alterations and earlier treatments to the fabric of a place are evidence of its history and uses which may be part of its significance. Conservation action should assist and not impede their understanding.
- 3.2** Changes to a *place* should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.

Article 4 Knowledge, skills and techniques

4.1 *Conservation* should make use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of the *place*.

4.2 Traditional techniques and materials are preferred for the *conservation* of significant *fabric*. In some circumstances modern techniques and materials which offer substantial conservation benefits may be appropriate.

The use of modern materials and techniques must be supported by firm scientific evidence or by a body of experience.

Article 5 Values

5.1 *Conservation* of a *place* should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.

Conservation of places with natural significance is explained in the Australian Natural Heritage Charter. This Charter defines natural significance to mean the importance of ecosystems, biological diversity and geodiversity for their existence value, or for present or future generations in terms of their scientific, social, aesthetic and life-support value.

5.2 Relative degrees of *cultural significance* may lead to different *conservation* actions at a place.

A cautious approach is needed, as understanding of cultural significance may change. This article should not be used to justify actions which do not retain cultural significance.

Article 6 Burra Charter Process

6.1 The *cultural significance* of a *place* and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and

The Burra Charter process, or sequence of investigations, decisions and actions, is illustrated in the accompanying flowchart.

analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy.

6.2 The policy for managing a *place* must be based on an understanding of its *cultural significance*.

6.3 Policy development should also include consideration of other factors affecting the future of a *place* such as the owner's needs, resources, external constraints and its physical condition.

Article 7 Use

7.1 Where the *use* of a *place* is of *cultural significance* it should be retained.

7.2 A *place* should have a *compatible use*.

The policy should identify a use or combination of uses or constraints on uses that retain the cultural significance of the place. New use of a place should involve minimal change, to significant fabric and use; should respect associations and meanings; and where appropriate should provide for continuation of practices which contribute to the cultural significance of the place.

Article 8 Setting

Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual *setting* and other relationships that

Aspects of the visual setting may include the use, siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and materials.

Other relationships, such as historical connections, may contribute to

contribute to the interpretation, appreciation, enjoyment or
cultural experience of the place.
significance of
the *place*.

New construction,
demolition,
intrusions or
other changes
which would
adversely affect
the setting or
relationships are
not appropriate.

Article 9 Location

- 9.1** The physical location of a *place* is part of its *cultural significance*. A building, work or other component of a place should remain in its historical location. Relocation is generally unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival.
- 9.2** Some buildings, works or other components of *places* were designed to be readily removable or already have a history of relocation. Provided such buildings, works or other components do not have significant links with their present location, removal may be appropriate.
- 9.3** If any building, work or other component is moved, it should be moved to an appropriate location and given an

appropriate *use*.
Such action
should not be to
the detriment of
any *place* of
cultural
significance.

Article 10 Contents

Contents, fixtures
and objects which
contribute to the
cultural
significance of a
place should be
retained at that
place. Their
removal is
unacceptable
unless it is: the
sole means of
ensuring their
security and
preservation; on
a temporary basis
for treatment or
exhibition; for
cultural reasons;
for health and
safety; or to
protect the place.
Such contents,
fixtures and
objects should be
returned where
circumstances
permit and it is
culturally
appropriate.

Article 11 Related places and objects

The contribution
which *related*
places and
related objects
make to the
cultural
significance of
the *place* should
be retained.

Article 12 Participation

Conservation,
interpretation and
management of a
place should
provide for the
participation of
people for whom
the place has
special

associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place.

Article 13 Co-existence of cultural values

Co-existence of cultural values should be recognised, respected and encouraged, especially in cases where they conflict.

For some places, conflicting cultural values may affect policy development and management decisions. In this article, the term cultural values refers to those beliefs which are important to a cultural group, including but not limited to political, religious, spiritual and moral beliefs. This is broader than values associated with cultural significance.

Conservation Processes

Article 14 Conservation processes

Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a *use*; retention of *associations and meanings*; *maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation*; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

There may be circumstances where no action is required to achieve conservation.

Article 15 Change

15.1 Change may be necessary to retain *cultural significance*, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a *place* should be guided by the *cultural significance* of

When change is being considered, a range of options should be explored to seek the option which minimises the reduction of cultural significance.

the place and its appropriate *interpretation*.

- 15.2** Changes which reduce *cultural significance* should be reversible, and be reversed when circumstances permit.
- Reversible changes should be considered temporary. Non-reversible change should only be used as a last resort and should not prevent future conservation action.
- 15.3** Demolition of significant *fabric* of a *place* is generally not acceptable. However, in some cases minor demolition may be appropriate as part of *conservation*. Removed significant fabric should be reinstated when circumstances permit.
- 15.4** The contributions of all aspects of *cultural significance* of a *place* should be respected. If a place includes *fabric, uses, associations* or *meanings* of different periods, or different aspects of cultural significance, emphasising or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasised or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.

Article 16 Maintenance

Maintenance is fundamental to *conservation* and should be undertaken where *fabric* is of *cultural significance* and its *maintenance* is necessary to retain that *cultural significance*.

Article 17 Preservation

Preservation is appropriate where the existing *fabric* or its condition constitutes evidence of *cultural significance*, or where insufficient evidence is available to allow other *conservation* processes to be carried out.

Preservation protects fabric without obscuring the evidence of its construction and use. The process should always be applied:

- where the evidence of the fabric is of such significance that it should not be altered;
- where insufficient investigation has been carried out to permit policy decisions to be taken in accord with Articles 26 to 28.

New work (e.g. stabilisation) may be carried out in association with preservation when its purpose is the physical protection of the fabric and when it is consistent with Article 22.

Article 18 Restoration and reconstruction

Restoration and reconstruction should reveal culturally significant aspects of the *place*.

Article 19 Restoration

Restoration is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the *fabric*.

Article 20 Reconstruction

20.1 *Reconstruction* is appropriate only where a *place* is incomplete through damage or alteration, and

only where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the *fabric*. In rare cases, reconstruction may also be appropriate as part of a *use* or practice that retains the *cultural significance* of the place.

20.2 *Reconstruction* should be identifiable on close inspection or through additional *interpretation*.

Article 21 *Adaptation* must be limited to that which is essential to a use for the *place* determined in accordance with Articles [6](#) and [7](#).

21.1 *Adaptation* is acceptable only where the adaptation has minimal impact on the *cultural significance* of the *place*. *Adaptation* is acceptable only where the adaptation has minimal impact on the *cultural significance* of the *place*.

21.2 *Adaptation* should involve minimal change to significant fabric, achieved only after considering alternatives.

Article 22 *New work*

22.1 New work such as additions to the *place* may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the *cultural significance* of the place, or detract from its *interpretation* and New work may be sympathetic if its siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material are similar to the existing fabric, but imitation should be avoided.

appreciation.

- 22.2** New work should be readily identifiable as such.

Article 23 Conserving use

Continuing, modifying or reinstating a significant *use* may be appropriate and preferred forms of *conservation*.

These may require changes to significant *fabric* but they should be minimised. In some cases, continuing a significant use or practice may involve substantial new work.

Article 24 Retaining associations and meanings

- 24.1** Significant *associations* between people and a *place* should be respected, retained and not obscured. Opportunities for the *interpretation*, commemoration and celebration of these associations should be investigated and implemented.

For many places associations will be linked to use.

- 24.2** Significant *meanings*, including spiritual values, of a *place* should be respected. Opportunities for the continuation or revival of these meanings should be investigated and implemented.

Article 25 Interpretation

The *cultural significance* of many *places* is not readily apparent, and should be explained by *interpretation*. Interpretation should enhance understanding

and enjoyment,
and be culturally
appropriate.

Article 26 Applying the Burra Charter process

- 26.1** Work on a *place* should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines. The results of studies should be up to date, regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.
- 26.2** Written statements of *cultural significance* and policy for the *place* should be prepared, justified and accompanied by supporting evidence. The statements of significance and policy should be incorporated into a management plan for the place. Statements of significance and policy should be kept up to date by regular review and revision as necessary. The management plan may deal with other matters related to the management of the place.
- 26.3** Groups and individuals with *associations* with a *place* as well as those involved in its management should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in understanding the *cultural significance* of the place. Where appropriate they should also have opportunities to participate in its *conservation* and management.

Managing

Article 27 change

27.1 The impact of proposed changes on the *cultural significance* of a *place* should be analysed with reference to the statement of significance and the policy for managing the place. It may be necessary to modify proposed changes following analysis to better retain cultural significance.

27.2 Existing *fabric, use, associations* and *meanings* should be adequately recorded before any changes are made to the *place*.

Article 28 Disturbance of fabric

Disturbance of significant *fabric* for study, or to obtain evidence, should be minimised. Study of a *place* by any disturbance of the fabric, including archaeological excavation, should only be undertaken to provide data essential for decisions on the *conservation* of the place, or to obtain important evidence about to be lost or made inaccessible.

Investigation of a *place* which requires disturbance of the *fabric*, apart from that necessary to make decisions,

may be appropriate provided that it is consistent with the policy for the place. Such investigation should be based on important research questions which have potential to substantially add to knowledge, which cannot be answered in other ways and which minimises disturbance of significant fabric.

Article 29 Responsibility for decisions

The organisations and individuals responsible for management decisions should be named and specific responsibility taken for each such decision.

Article 30 Direction, supervision and implementation

Competent direction and supervision should be maintained at all stages, and any changes should be implemented by people with appropriate knowledge and skills.

Article 31 Documenting evidence and decisions

A log of new evidence and additional decisions should be kept.

Article 32 Records

32.1 The records associated with

the *conservation* of a *place* should be placed in a permanent archive and made publicly available, subject to requirements of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.

- 32.2** Records about the history of a *place* should be protected and made publicly available, subject to requirements of security and privacy, and where this is culturally appropriate.

Article 33 Removed fabric

Significant *fabric* which has been removed from a *place* including contents, fixtures and objects, should be catalogued, and protected in accordance with its *cultural significance*.

Where possible and culturally appropriate, removed significant fabric including contents, fixtures and objects, should be kept at the place.

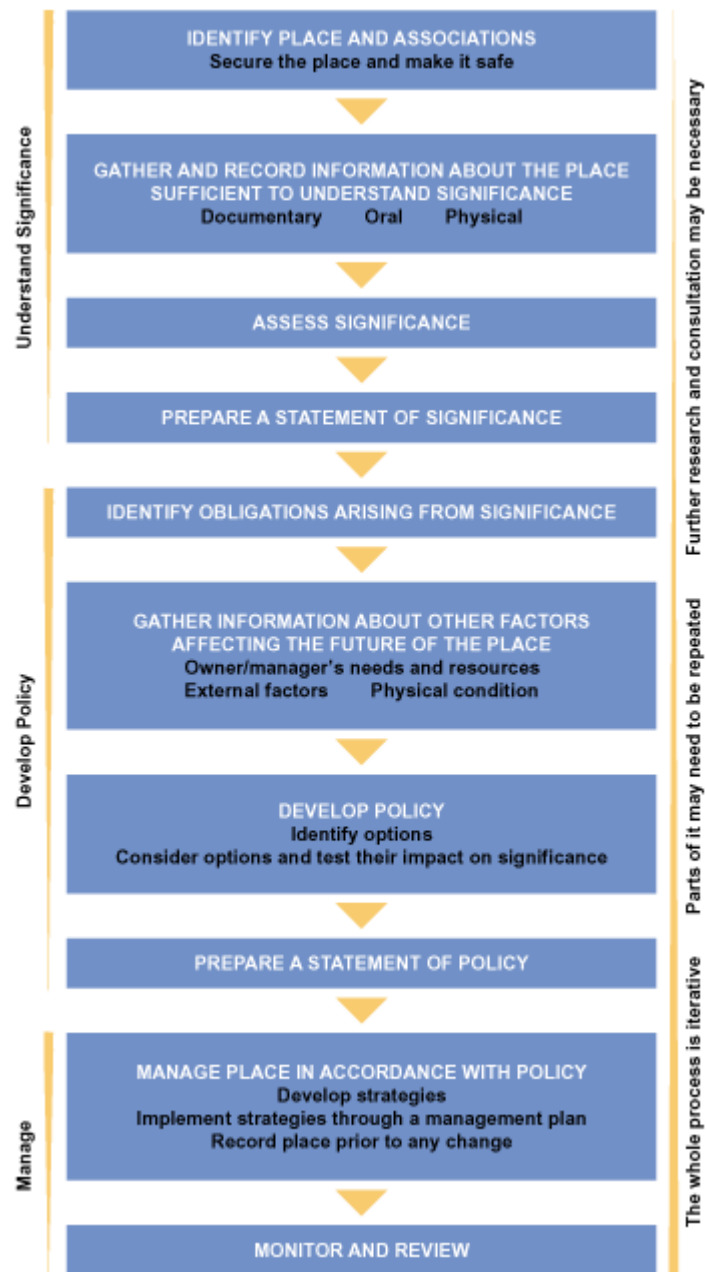
Article 34 Resources

Adequate resources should be provided for *conservation*. The best conservation often involves the least work and can be inexpensive.

Words in italics are defined in Article 1.

The Burra Charter Process

Sequence of investigations, decisions and actions



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