

## Practice Note on Engineering and Industrial Heritage

### 1. Preamble

Engineering works of heritage significance are those which:

- mark an important achievement or change in direction in our knowledge or skills;
- are directly associated with an historic phase, eminent person or organisation;
- are highly valued by a particular community or group;
- are rare; or
- are representative of a particular class of works.

These works provide evidence of important engineering activity in the past, and need to be recognised, recorded and conserved for future generations.

The present generation of engineers owe a duty of care in dealing with significant engineering heritage works.

### 2. Background

2.1 'Heritage' means the works, places and objects that we have inherited from the past and are significant to hand on to future generations.

As engineering has substantially developed Australia and shaped its history, the conservation of our engineering and industrial heritage:

- provides continuity with the past and with the Nation's growth;
- demonstrates the development of ideas and technology; and
- celebrates the genius of our forebears – those who built the foundations on which engineering and modern Australia rests.

As such the heritage of our engineering and industry is a National asset, and a gift that we owe to the Nation and to those that come after us.

2.2 The works, documents and artefacts of engineers are an integral and important part of our Nation's cultural heritage.

2.3 *Engineers Australia* (EA) encourages members to draw inspiration and knowledge from our engineering heritage. The conservation of our engineering and industrial heritage will help fulfil EA's aspirations for:

- the sustainability of engineering outcomes;
- advancement of the science and practice of engineering;
- promotion of the contribution of the profession;
- stimulation and learning from the creativity and innovation of engineers;
- celebration of excellence in engineering outcomes; and
- adherence to economic, social, and environmental values.

2.4 *Engineering Heritage Australia* (EHA) has carriage of EA's concerns for engineering, industrial and technological heritage and provides leadership in its protection, conservation and recording following industry best practice (see end note). Amongst other things EHA:

- represents EA on engineering heritage matters and in national heritage forums;
- develops policies and guidelines;
- manages the programs for Engineering Heritage Recognition, Oral History and several engineering heritage awards; and
- is the advocate for engineering and industrial heritage, promotes awareness and provides guidance on heritage matters.

2.5 Division engineering heritage groups are intimately involved at the State and local level in promoting the conservation of engineering heritage, in providing advice and guidance, and in representing EA on engineering heritage matters.

### 3. Policy

#### 3.1 *Engineers Australia* recognises that:

- Heritage is a vital ingredient in our appreciation of Australia's social and engineering history and is important in the development of ideas and technology and in celebrating the contribution of past engineers to the Nation and the profession.
- The conservation and appreciation of engineering and industrial heritage is a significant ingredient in the advancement of the science and practice of engineering; in the promotion of the contribution of the profession; in the stimulation and learning from the creativity and innovation of engineers; in encouraging sustainability; and in promoting economic, social and environmental values.
- Much engineering is utilitarian and may appear so commonplace that its heritage value can be easily overlooked. Items may then be discarded and destroyed when they can no longer fulfil their required function, while adaptation to another purpose is often neglected.
- Our engineering and industrial heritage is often lost or unsympathetically modified because of inadequate appreciation or understanding of its intrinsic value, its association with a significant person or event or of its place in the evolution of engineering endeavour.
- As engineering and industrial heritage is a significant component of Australia's cultural heritage, *Engineers Australia* has a duty to promote its conservation.

#### 3.2 Accordingly, in any activity associated with a heritage place, priority should be given to its conservation.

#### 3.3 *Engineers Australia* expects its members and encourages others when dealing with a place which may have engineering heritage significance, to:

- 3.3.1 Have regard to the principles of the *Burra Charter* (and other recognised conservation guidelines for mechanical plant and movable heritage) in the identification, assessment, recording, conservation and management of the place,
- 3.3.2 Comply with the requirements of legislation relating to heritage within the State, Territory or country in which they are practising, or which relate to the site of their work.
- 3.3.3 Acknowledge the interest of *Engineering Heritage Australia*, and as necessary seek its guidance.
- 3.3.4 Obtain input from appropriate heritage professionals when the relevant expertise or skills are needed.
- 3.3.5 Give positive consideration to the adaptive re-use or recycling of heritage works in preference to radical or unsympathetic modification, demolition or replacement.
- 3.3.6 Record significant works which cannot be retained, before their demolition or disposal. This will require documentation in accordance with accepted principles, after rigorous evaluation of their heritage values and options for their retention.
- 3.3.7 Treat records, including documents (both hard copy and electronic), sound recordings and images, as potential heritage items.

#### 3.4 *Engineers Australia*:

- 3.4.1 regards Conservation and Heritage Engineers as having the same standing as other heritage professionals;
- 3.4.2 believes that that having regard to the quantum of engineering and industrial heritage, encourages the appointment of engineers to heritage councils and similar bodies; and
- 3.4.3 encourages its members and others to support and assist heritage organisations to ensure the conservation of heritage works, including the archiving of records.

#### 3.5 While *Engineers Australia* does not generally undertake the direct conservation and ongoing care of engineering heritage works, it encourages owners and other organisations (such as museums, preservation societies and trusts) to carry out this work.

**END NOTE**

The *Burra Charter* is Australia's guide to best practice for heritage places; it was first adopted in 1979 and has since been revised three times. It is an internationally recognised benchmark, has been translated into many languages, and has influenced development of policy in other lands. The full title of the Charter is the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*; ICOMOS is the acronym for *International Council on Monuments and Sites*. Included in the definitions of heritage terminology in the *Burra Charter* are:

- 'place' which means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, and may include components, contents, spaces and views; and
- 'conservation' which means all the processes of looking after place so as to retain its cultural significance. ('Processes' include maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and retention of the setting that contributes to the significance of the place).

Mechanical Plant and movable heritage may need detailed guidance beyond that provided by the Burra Charter. EHA is developing such guidance to incorporate in an engineering heritage conservation guideline.

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