

ENGINEERING HERITAGE AUSTRALIA

HERITAGE ENGINEERING PRACTICE NOTES



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

PRACTICE NOTE No. 2

ASSESSMENT OF ENGINEERING HERITAGE ITEMS

Purpose

The purpose of this practice note is to provide engineers and others with a process for assessing engineering heritage significance.

Preamble

Whilst standalone items such as hydroelectric dams and bridges are readily recognised as engineering works and often have heritage value, there is a wide range of engineering heritage hidden within, overlooked or underrated in numerous works around Australia.

Most facets of our lives rely on some engineering item.

Our industry, water supplies, sewerage systems, electricity generation supply and usage, buildings, machines and computers are examples of engineering influence.

They are elements of our history and cultural heritage and their recognition is important to our understanding of how we got where we are.

The engineering is often a component within a total work.

Within a building it may be the structure or parts of it, the services, the machinery or the foundations.

It may be an innovative design or advance in technology or of developing new processes or materials and may involve new construction techniques.

It will often be associated with an important engineer.

Common to all is the engineering and the task is to assess its significance.

Basic Principles

The task of assessing an engineering item starts with determination of:-

- Whether it is an example of a technological advance.
- The history of the item. Its materials, design, construction, usage.
- The influence of it on our society.
- The criteria to be used.

The principles take account of the fact that an item may not rate highly as an example of technical expertise but may have great social importance. The distinction is important as the technology of engineering has significant heritage importance due to its social impact.

Equally the criteria to be used and their weighting will often be varied dependent upon the desired outcome. Examples are the need to determine the toxicity of an industrial site being considered for public access or the continued use of a bridge or machine where public safety is an issue.

The Process

- Determine the criteria. Refer to Practice Note 1.
- Investigate the history including the people involved in design and construction.
- Determine where the item fits in the development of engineering.
- Rate the engineering importance- exceptional, high, low, none.

- Rate the social importance - exceptional, high, low, none.
- Look at and evaluate the options for the end use.
- Rate the item's heritage significance- exceptional, high, low, none.
- Provide recommendations for action.