

Submission:
Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places:
Productivity Commission Issues Paper, May 2005.

I am hopeful that you will get a number of submissions suggesting how you might determine the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of government interventions in historic heritage identification and management.

There has been perhaps too little attention given to evaluating policy and practices related to the historic environment and, in particular, fixing on evaluative techniques to deal with intangibles. I suggest that some of the techniques to determine value of protected areas, landcare practices and natural environments might be adapted to the historic environment. I would expect a conclusion of this inquiry to be similar to that in a fairly recent report on government intervention in regional development¹. That is the report might express the need for more research into evaluation methodologies to better determine not only the effectiveness of historic heritage policies and practices, but also to assess intangible values.

I also expect your report to explore experiences of government intervention. That will no doubt involve your inquiry in making appraisal of efforts at the Commonwealth and State levels, and possibly indicating comparisons with efforts in several overseas countries. I suggest the inquiry should also make appraisal of the experiences of several local government areas, and this will probably proceed by way of case studies to illuminate general principles of policy frameworks as well as the efficacy of some projects.

My most recent experience has involved me in working with a cluster of four councils on the border, with two sets of two councils within different state jurisdictions - the two city councils of Albury and Wodonga and the two surrounding shires, Indigo and Greater Murray. I suggest you consider the following points:

- I note that the new Victorian Heritage Strategy Report envisages the development of ways to monitor the condition of Victoria's heritage. This may well be echoed at the local level, so that heritage is considered in the reports such as the annual State of the Environment report required in New South Wales. Coordination of such reporting at all three levels would clarify the national situation.
- Both Indigo Shire and Greater Murray Shire are newly amalgamated local governments – each comprised of three former shires. One of the first activities of the new Indigo Shire was to undertake a heritage study, using Victorian Pride of Place funding support. The study helped bring the historic towns of Beechworth, Yackandandah and Chiltern closer together. It helped act as a 'glue' bringing three separate communities together into one. Similarly Greater Hume Shire has begun with a history that may grow into the first stage of a heritage study. Three disparate local government areas – Hume, Culcairn and Holbrook – have been joined together and the history (and heritage) will help those places understand what they have in common as well as explore and make known their distinctive identities. In other words, social cohesion and identity are important at the local as well as the national level.

¹ Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, *Working Paper 55 – Government interventions in pursuit of regional development, learning from experience*, June 2003.

- Neither history nor heritage have attracted the same notice and support in the faster growing urban areas of Albury and Wodonga. It seems local government is forever looking for ways to have the State or Commonwealth Government take up responsibility for an item that appears to it to be too expensive to maintain, no matter its other merits. So, for example, Wodonga City Council is reluctant to be involved in funding the Bonegilla Migrant Reception and Training Centre, while it can attract state funds to do so. This is in spite of the economic and social significance of the former migrant centre to Wodonga, even when there were more people at Bonegilla than there were in the town of Wodonga. Whereever possible local government tends to pass the payment of the buck upstairs.
- Last, in my surveys of the literature on evaluation of intangible benefits I have found no mention of the political rewards associated with the bestowal of state or national heritage status. Reports of the recent listing of Glenrowan on the new National Heritage List indicate that the local federal member regards the bestowal, in part at least, as part of the reward for her advocacy of the listing and championship of her constituents' interests.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Bruce Pennay
21 July 2005.