

SOUTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL

SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

Conservation of Australia's Heritage Places

July 2005

INTRODUCTION

Southern Midlands Council welcomes the inquiry into this most important issue. As a local government area with an abundance of built cultural heritage, Council is well aware of many of the challenges and opportunities this presents.

The following submission refers directly to the questions posed in the Commission's Issues Paper (in italic font), followed by Council's submission (in normal font).

Section 1

What is the rationale for government involvement in historic heritage conservation and what principles should guide that involvement?

In most instances, all levels of government bear some involvement in historic heritage conservation. Whether this is through statutory control, ownership, funding or an advisory capacity, government have a responsibility to ensure appropriate historic heritage conservation within their area of jurisdiction.

All levels of government in Australia have statutory duties in regards to conservation of historic heritage places as guided by federal and state legislation and local planning regulations. As the administrators of these regulations, the rationale for government involvement in historic heritage conservation is to ensure that the heritage significance of a place, as identified in any level of registration, is maintained in line with the legislative powers provided by the relevant act or planning schedule.

Generally, the principals which guide this involvement should be:

- The primary listing/registration/classification of historic heritage places should be at a level appropriate to their assigned significance (i.e. local, state or national).
- In most cases, government involvement in heritage conservation should initiate from the lowest tier of government and be referred to higher levels as the significance and listing of the place dictates. For example, the conservation issues of a place listed only at a local government level should be managed by local government, according to the provisions in their planning scheme. Local government should refer places listed at state or national levels to higher authority, whilst still maintaining the requirement of that local planning authority.
- Public involvement at all stages of government heritage management must be encouraged. Where public monies are being spent, where publicly owned buildings are involved, the needs and desires of communities must be considered. Government heritage management must therefore not merely deal with the physical, administrative or financial aspects of conservation, but also include communications, public benefits and education programs. This ensures widespread public approval and generates positive awareness of the proactive role played by government in heritage management.

In particular, government has a responsibility to conserve publicly owned buildings, or historic sites with a former government function – to ensure that their heritage value is appropriately maintained and presented.

The principals which guide this involvement should be:

- Appropriate analysis of the costs of conservation and an understanding of the return on this investment, both immediately and wider flow-on.
- The appropriate tier of government bearing the financial shortfall of the above analysis where it can be justified that the significance of the place warrants public expenditure to maintain its heritage value.
- Where ownership or significance of a place can be categorised into more than one level of government, partnerships between government levels need to be developed and maintained.

The following answers to selected questions outlined in this Productivity Commission response will address the rationale for Southern Midlands Council's (SMC's) involvement in heritage, how this is undertaken, the strengths and weaknesses of this system and how this level of government interacts (or should interact) with other levels of government and heritage stakeholders.

How does the policy framework for historic heritage conservation currently operate and what are its strengths and weaknesses?

The following statutory and policy listings and requirements for conservation of historic heritage places exist under SMC jurisdiction, hence guides the policy framework for historic heritage conservation in the municipality:

- **SMC Planning Scheme 1998, Section 9** (Historic Special Interest Area). The intent of this section is to conserve and enhance the historic character of the major historic townships of the region. Where Schedule 2 (below) and THR listings are primarily site-based, this section allows council more control over precinct planning, streetscapes and rural vistas. This is a crucial aspect of heritage planning which higher-level listings do not have the capacity or power to cover.
- **SMC Planning Scheme 1998, Section 10** (planning provisions). Section 10:1 of the SMC Planning Scheme 1998 deals with planning provisions regarding historic buildings and works. This section empowers the Heritage Advisory Committee to make recommendations to Council with regard to heritage properties identified in Schedule 2 (Places of Historic Value) or those contained in the area defined by Section 9 as a Historic Special Interest Area.
- **SMC Planning Scheme 1998, Schedule 2** (Places of Historic Value). 243 places are listed on this schedule, of which 12 are government owned. If a place is listed

on this schedule, and not on any other (national or state) register, proposed development applications on these sites are referred to the Municipal Architect for comment. SMC's elected members consider any comment when assessing the application.

- **SMC Heritage Advisory Committee.** Under the SMC Planning Scheme 1998, Council may appoint a Heritage Advisory Committee to provide it with recommendations in regard to applications pertaining to listed sites.
- **Tasmanian Heritage Register (THR),** 182 properties in the Southern Midlands are permanently registered on the THR. Regardless of whether or not any of these places appear on the SMC schedule (above), planning issues are referred to Heritage Tasmania for assessment via their Works Assessment Advisory Committee, who provide advice to the Tasmanian Heritage Council who then refer their decision to SMC. SMC is legally obligated to enforce these recommendations and assess development applications accordingly.
- **Register of the National Estate (RNE).** No legislative power to assess development applications arises from RNE listing, however RNE listings are duplicated on the THR, therefore works applications on RNE listed properties are referred by SMC as per the THR process above.
- **SMC heritage staffing.** SMC employ a Municipal Architect (Heritage Advisor) on a consultancy basis and a part-time Heritage Project Officer is on staff.
- **SMC heritage sub-committees.** Several sub committees of council exist for management of specific heritage sites.

There are no places within the SMC municipal boundaries that are on the Commonwealth, National or World Heritage Lists. Procedures for handling developments regarding any future inclusions onto these lists will need to be included in future planning of procedure by SMC.

There are a number of places within SMC which are listed by the National Trust of Australia. Again, no legislative requirements arise from these listings, however they are offered statutory protection via duplicated THR listing.

Strengths of this system (note: strengths/weaknesses relate to SMC heritage policies and are not necessarily applicable to higher levels of policy).

- There is the potential for classification of places on the appropriate level list according to their significance.
- This hierarchical classification allows conservation planning to be undertaken at a lower level of government where practical (i.e. local government can manage heritage at that level if a place is of only local significance – therefore not overstressing resources of state or national administrators
- Community groups are able to have an input and easily be consulted to assist in heritage management issues.

Weaknesses of this system

- The SMC historic places schedule is outdated and provides inadequate coverage of historic heritage places.
- Whilst there is the capacity to list sites according to their significance, there is an unclear definition of what constitutes local, state or national significance. Any definitions used are often inaccurate and fail to accurately assign significance to the correct level.
- There is no synthesis between the local schedule and state/national registers. Whilst the SMC schedule should be the primary list of places of local significance, some of these are unnecessarily duplicated on the THR and RNE. The SMC list should be a comprehensive list of all historic heritage places, and refer to higher listings where appropriate to ensure efficient referral of issues to higher authority.
- The SMC schedule cannot assume that adequate protection is offered at state or national levels to sites with higher than local significance, as these registers may have similar shortcomings.
- Community heritage groups are often fragmented from council, therefore there work is inadequately guided or recognized.

What are the current pressures and emerging trends influencing the conservation of historic heritage places and, in light of these, how can the policy framework be improved?

There is an emerging trend from the Tasmanian state government to further develop partnerships with local government in order to spread the load of heritage management to other tiers of government according to the significance of a place. This, as an overall concept, is a move in the right direction, however relies on a strategic and uniform approach. This will not work unless there is state-lead management of all local government areas to ensure that policies, thresholds and significance assessments are all implemented and managed to a certain standard and uniformity. Beside this is the need for a coordinated approach with other state/territory governments to ensure that Tasmania adopts a similar approach guided by national legislation and procedure.

Do current lists adequately recognise degrees of cultural significance of historic heritage places? If so, are the factors which determine degrees of cultural significance appropriate?

No. The two previous questions illustrate the inadequacies of assigning degrees of cultural significance and the consequences for confusing which list might be appropriate to deal with heritage issues.

It is certainly possible to develop factors which determine degrees of cultural significance. The issue which arises when adopting this, however, is ensuring uniform development and application across state and local government levels. It is not appropriate to develop threshold levels of local and state significance unless all local governments adopt uniform thresholds. Similarly, one level up, all states should develop

uniform threshold levels to determine what is of local or national significance. This concept could exist in theory, however its strategic application nationally would be a long and arduous process. SMC recognise this issue as being one of the foremost challenges in current government heritage management.

Is there a need for a comprehensive survey of historic heritage places in Australia? If so, who should fund such a study and how would its findings be used?

Yes, there is a need for a comprehensive study of this kind, however, as explained above, this would need to be done in a uniform manner, which would distinguish significance according to predefined thresholds. Again, this is a project which should be done in partnership with all levels of government to ensure that national standards are maintained, with a locally focused approach.

Section 2

Are market failures present in the conservation of historic heritage places? If so, do they differ in significance or scope from those which may exist in other forms of conservation (such as conservation of natural heritage)?

To what extent does historic heritage conservation generate benefits for the community?

Most heritage listings include a criterion for 'community value', where a heritage place may have special meaning to the community. Provided a place can justifiably meet this criterion, the conservation and promotion of these historic cultural heritage values has benefit to the community.

Beyond the essential single-site based approach to conservation, SMC undertake conservation in a more holistic manner as a means of gauging community benefit through flow-on effects. This involves linking sites and precincts both within the immediate region, and inter-regionally, as a means of generating maximum and widest community benefit. This approach is an essential mechanism of government heritage management, and often means that a single site-based approach is not sustainable. Achievement of critical-mass of heritage places is an approach which regional governments must aim for.

Benefits also extend to pride in our combined heritage; economic, social, education, skill acquisition

For new owners, there is also a sense of people wanting to associate with their region and contribute to the perceived value of the region. There is the hope/plan that their respective properties will appreciate in value; by long term owners the continuation of their family's holdings (property) there is an innate connectedness with the Community/region and maybe to a lesser extent, ditto the aforementioned comment about value

Southern Midlands Council also sees the significant potential for community benefit flowing from heritage places in terms of the generation of jobs and investment principally through tourism.

How do these community-based benefits compare to the personal benefits which owners of heritage places would receive through conservation?

In light of the above statements, the major difference between government and private conservation projects is the diffusion of benefits throughout the community, as opposed to a single place. Economic reality dictates that private owners of heritage places must immediately benefit by conservation. Whether this is by commercial visitation, personal usage or capital gain, private individuals/partnerships or companies undertake conservation for gain. They are unlikely to conserve a place simply to promote community benefit.

Government can therefore be somewhat more extravagant with their conservation practices, without being so concerned with immediate and tangible return. Government can afford to conserve heritage places if there can be justifiably assessed, intangible benefits to the wider community – without necessarily making a tangible, site-based return on a single conserved place.

How well do existing government regulations or activities specifically address market failures that are directly relevant to conservation of historic heritage places?

Does government involvement in heritage conservation displace private sector involvement, which would otherwise occur? If so, to what extent?

It is unlikely that government involvement in heritage conservation would displace private involvement. As discussed throughout this submission, government involvement and the resulting cost-benefit analysis

What are the costs of government involvement in the conservation of historic heritage places and who bears them?

Have these costs changed as a result of economic trends? For example, have pressures on government finances limited the amount of resources available for public heritage conservation?

Yes, with a greater understanding of, and interest in heritage places, government has recognised that this as a market that can assist in economic development, thus can justifiably use public monies for public heritage conservation. This economic trend has certainly assisted the industry and is likely to continue to be an area of growth. Nonetheless, heritage, particularly for local government authorities, is an area that still is low on the priority list. SMC allocate a small amount of regular, annual funding for heritage sites and projects; however rely on external funding (grants etc.) to be able to achieve even a part of their overall heritage plans. This makes planning and budgeting

difficult, as plans may rely primarily on grant funds – of which there is no guarantee that applications will be successful (further discussion later).

How do these costs vary depending on the nature and extent of conservation?

Are there any regulatory barriers which prevent private organisations from capturing benefits from the conservation of historic heritage places?

What are the benefits from government involvement in the conservation of heritage places and to whom do they accrue?

How do these benefits vary depending on the nature and extent of conservation?

What are the benefits to tourism from heritage conservation, and what impact does heritage tourism have on the conservation of heritage places?

For many regional towns, rural decline and changing farming practice has displaced populations and resulted in general economic decline. For towns with a rich legacy of built historic cultural heritage, hiatus and decline has preserved much of this environment – absence of development pressure acting as a means of involuntary conservation. It is these regional areas, which now stand to reap the benefits of a new industry – that of tourism and promotion of the historic built environment.

This issue presents dilemmas, however;

- With an area such as the Port Arthur Historic Site, do we keep it in accordance with ICOMOS or does it move towards a theme park in the pursuit of continuous support from the general public and lessening its reliance on Government financial support ?
- In Evandale (Northern Tasmania), it was observed that there was a popularity with visitors that were attracted to the “quant village atmosphere” of Evandale, so much so that many of them elected to buy a property and build there own home in that environment. That was fine, however with that new development came all of the “trappings” of a normal urban environment, eg concrete footpaths, “modernist” building forms, conventional design. In fact the people that moved to the place because they loved it, were significantly contributing to the eradication of the values and “sense of place” that brought them there.

Do governments and public funding bodies use benefit–cost analysis in allocating funds between heritage conservation projects? Are any types of benefits or costs commonly omitted from these analyses? Are alternative approaches used, such as cost effectiveness?

Can the benefits and costs of the conservation of heritage places be satisfactorily quantified to aid decision making?

The intangible and flow-on-effect benefits of heritage conservation is a value which is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain and thus is often inadequately addressed in decision making. Particularly in the public sector, where heritage conservation need not be obviously economically viable on a single-site basis, the widespread benefits of such must be better quantified and understood to justify decision making.

The potential for widespread community benefits, such as contribution to heritage precincts, thematic linkages, social/spiritual connections and cultural continuity are qualities which must be explored and quantified when gauging the potential of a conservation project. This is where public consultation and encouragement of a sense of community ownership is important. Decision makers need to involve all levels of the community to attempt to quantify these values. Particularly where public funds and/or places are involved, this guidance can help foster good public-relations and ensure that intangible values are adequately addressed.

Particular where a geographic region achieves a 'critical-mass' of tourist attractive heritage places, the economic and social consequences of such are difficult to quantify. Whilst it may be easy to undertake a cost-benefit analysis on a single site, as a means of determining its economic viability, it is much more difficult to ascertain how much visitors to that site will spend at other nearby attractions. This is particularly an issue for government, as their primary interest may not be vested purely in the economics of a single site, but to achieve overall benefit to the community through a range of flow-on effects.

How should tangible costs (such as repair costs) be compared with intangible and diffuse benefits (such as educational benefits and 'sense of community belonging')?

For the reasons outlined above, it is a particular concern of government heritage managers to ensure that sufficient research is undertaken into the intangible and diffuse benefits of heritage management. Whilst the tangible benefits are obvious, further justification for expenditure on heritage places can be achieved through demonstrating other benefits. This is not a straightforward and simple analysis, but one that is crucial for government heritage managers to consider.

SECTION 3

What proportion of historic heritage places are owned by the private sector?

Southern Midlands municipality heritage listings at 30/6/2005. Excluding natural and indigenous heritage places.						
	SMC heritage schedule (1998)	Tasmanian Heritage Register (permanent listings)	Register of the National Estate (all listings)	Commonwealth Heritage Register	National Heritage Register	World Heritage List
Total	243	182	83	0	0	0
Government owned	12	7	9			
Church owned	15	12	7			

What are the strengths and weaknesses of private ownership of historic heritage places?

How is the private sector contributing to the conservation of historic heritage places?

Are there impediments to commercial conservation activities (for example, perception by owners that conservation costs are prohibitive compared to benefits to them)?

Yes, there is a general perception amongst the community that heritage administrators are the enemy and that listing removes their rights as a property owner.

Have shortages of skilled tradespeople acted as an impediment to historic heritage conservation? If so, to what extent do these shortages reflect economic cycles in the building industry?

Currently the ABS tells us that there are 1.5 million tradespeople currently not working in their trade. The skills, knowledge and attitude required for the work on heritage properties is quite specialized and current “trade” training in work methods and materials differs from what is required in this sector of the building industry.

The establishment of a Heritage Trades Skill Centre to encourage the resurrection of the skills, knowledge and attitude to maintain our built heritage in a manner that honours the integrity of the structure is a proposal worth serious consideration.

Are there constraints on the availability of finance or insurance for historic heritage buildings?

Despite publications by the Tasmanian Heritage Council claiming that heritage listing does not affect insurance on properties, several insurance companies polled indicated that they would not provide a quotation for insurance on a heritage listed property. This is a major impediment when trying to convince the public that listing their property will not disadvantage them.

Have technological trends improved the ability of the private sector to undertake heritage conservation (for example, by increasing opportunities for adaptive reuse)?

What have been the impacts of social and demographic trends (such as population growth in inner city areas)?

Social and demographic trends have certainly had an effect on the conservation of historic heritage places with the Southern Midlands. This, however, is not a new concept. Throughout the twentieth century, social and demographic trends such as economic downturn, centralisation and population displacement all acted to slow development in the region. This meant that development pressure, as seen in larger centres, was absent from this regional centre for many years. This has acted almost as a ‘time-capsule’-buildings surviving which would have been replaced if development stimuli were greater. This is undoubtedly a common scenario in many regional areas in Australia.

In more recent years, the revival in the trend of ‘renovating’ has changed the impact of demographics on the historic built environment in the region. Firstly, a greater understanding and appreciation of heritage has acted to preserve sites and buildings which otherwise might have been left to ruin or destruction. The danger with this ‘renovation revolution’ is that often people with good intentions make the wrong decisions through inadequate knowledge of good conservation practice.

Are there specific issues for certain groups who own or manage historic properties (such as churches or universities)?

How do non-government organisations contribute to the conservation of historic heritage places?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the involvement of non-government organisations in historic heritage conservation?

How do these organisations establish priorities for conservation, and measure and report on their activities and performance?

What are the impediments to the conservation activities of volunteer organisations. For example, are there implications for conservation activities of an ageing volunteer community, and concerns about the health and safety and insurance of volunteer workers?

The requirement for thorough conservation of heritage places to be guided by a management plan often can inhibit the small-scale and often opportunistic work undertaken by volunteer organizations. Conservation planning needs to give greater acknowledgement to the contribution of such, and accordingly make provisions for such work in management plans. Although this can often be difficult to foresee.

Liability issues in general have also effected the contribution that volunteer organisations can make to heritage conservation. Historic heritage sites are often unstable, isolated or unpredictable, therefore can be dangerous.

It is suggested that a model similar to that established by the Commonwealth Government on “green matters” through Green Corp may be a model to observe and analyse in relation to heritage matters. The basis of the model could be;

- Target group young people up to aged 18 to 25
 - School leavers,
 - Transitioning to University,
 - Young people who could have “lost their way”
- Contains a structured training component and practical placement, say building on modules as a possible career path (including some small business skill development modules). This could articulate to TAFE and UTAS
- Supervision is covered with the program by suitably qualified people with some professionals “pro bono” (as per Green Corps)
- Transportation to and from remote site is catered for within the program (as per Green Corps)
- Equipment is covered within the program (as per Green Corps)

These groups could be based regionally from the proposed Heritage Trades Skills Centres discussed previously.

Can the activities of these organisations be improved or expanded?

To what extent has the new heritage system reduced unnecessary duplication in heritage laws and processes between governments?

Has the new national system reduced the level of community confusion over heritage laws and processes?

Has it provided the overarching national policy framework which was sought by the Australian Government?

Are the roles and responsibilities of each level of government clear, appropriate and mutually supportive?

Does legislation in each State/Territory, and its implementation (for example, monitoring and enforcement), provide for efficient heritage conservation outcomes and, if not, why not? Are objectives clear, measurable and consistent with other legislation?

How might the current, or recent, State/Territory reviews improve outcomes?

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Will recent changes to Australian Government legislation affect the way State and Territory legislation is implemented and outcomes for heritage conservation?

Do all States and Territories manage heritage places within an explicit strategic framework? How can existing strategic frameworks be improved?

How important are well developed frameworks for facilitating historic heritage conservation?

Are there major differences in legislation, and its implementation, between States/Territories and, if so, do these differences affect historic heritage conservation?

How does interaction between various Acts, and between State/Territory legislation and local planning regulation, impact on heritage conservation outcomes? Is there scope for improvement?

Are State and Territory heritage councils (or authorities) producing efficient outcomes for heritage conservation? Are their functions appropriate? How well do they balance private and public development needs with historic heritage conservation?

How does the relationship between heritage councils and State/Territory government departments/agencies function, and are their respective roles clear and mutually supportive?

To what extent (if at all) are current heritage approaches that separate conservation of historic, Indigenous and natural heritage places impeding conservation of historic heritage places?

Are there conflicts between public policy in historic heritage conservation and in other forms of conservation (such as natural or Indigenous heritage)? If so, how are these conflicts resolved?

Are government incentives for private participation in historic heritage conservation comparable to those offered for participation in other forms of heritage conservation? If not, what does this imply for the level of private sector participation in historic heritage conservation?

Have the recent legislative changes by the Australian Government improved the administration of national lists and the overall conservation of historic heritage places?

Are the criteria and thresholds for listing on the registers administered by the Australian Government appropriate? How are the terms 'significant' and 'outstanding' interpreted in practice?

Should the potential costs of conservation be included in listing criteria to better target scarce government resources?

No – these are difficult to calculate without a full CMP for each site and if this was needed it would inhibit listing.

Given that the lists are expanding and government conservation resources are scarce, is there need for further prioritisation such that some on the lists are able to receive more conservation activity than others?

How do existing lists link with other heritage conservation policies and programs, including funding?

How do listing criteria for the World Heritage list compare with criteria for national lists? Given the existence of national lists, what additional benefits does World Heritage Listing provide?

What are the listing criteria for State and Territory heritage registers?

How does inclusion on a State or Territory register protect historic heritage places?

Given that registers keep expanding, and the scarcity of government conservation resources, is there prioritisation such that some historic heritage places are able to receive more conservation activity than others? What options are there for prioritising heritage places (for example, use of threat/value assessments)?

Is there adequate opportunity for public input in the listing process? Are the review and reporting requirements adequate?

Are there differences between States and Territories regarding breadth of coverage, list size and content, and processes for listing (such as criteria and extent of community consultation)? If so, do they affect conservation outcomes?

The most striking difference in State and Territory lists is the proportion of state and locally recognized heritage places.

How does local government recognise and protect historic heritage places?

What criteria do local governments use to list historic heritage places and how do these relate to those used by other levels of government?

How well do local governments resolve conflicts between protecting private property rights and achieving legitimate heritage conservation objectives? Should governments (at any level) be required to compensate for their actions which infringe on the property rights of private owners?

To what extent do local governments provide clear guidance about the rights and responsibilities of owners of heritage-listed properties?

Southern Midlands Council has provides some guidance to heritage listed property owners. SMC have developed a brief conservation publication produced by the Municipal Architect, which has distributed to new property owners since its development. For properties listed on its Planning Scheme alone (i.e. not on higher government listings) Council provides property owners with a free consultation session with the Municipal architect to discuss possible developments.

Recently, SMC has employed a Heritage Project Officer, a major role of this position is to provide a public interface between heritage stakeholders and Council.

How do local government regulations designed to protect historic heritage places relate to more general planning regulations?

What criteria do non-government organisations use to list historic heritage places?

How do the lists maintained by non-government organisations relate to those maintained by governments?

Is there greater scope for adaptive reuse for publicly owned heritage places than for those in private ownership?

No, there is probably less scope for adaptive reuse of publicly owned heritage places, as government heritage administrators are more obligated to adhere to standard heritage practice which often requires presentation of heritage places under a theme similar to its traditional use. This can constrain adaptive reuse, but act as a proponent to cultural continuity – a passive yet important conservation practice. Whilst heritage legislation limits all, adaptation, reversibility and reuse provisions do not completely inhibit large-scale adaptive reuse, particularly for the private/domestic sector.

Do management plans efficiently meet the objectives set out in the gazetted heritage principles? How useful and appropriate are the management principles in guiding management plans? Can they be improved?

Management plans, particular for government managed heritage properties, are documents which must be regularly maintained and reviewed. Changing personnel, public needs/expectations, political climate and financial situations significantly effect the way in which heritage management is undertaken. Whilst this may not greatly change the actual practice of conservation, it can severely effect the sites and conservation programs are managed. Bottom-line, management plans do efficiently meet the objectives of heritage principals at the time they are developed, however, if they are not regularly revised their effectiveness is compromised.

Are there issues related to the management of historic heritage places of importance to Australia, but located in other countries?

Yes. There are near-countless numbers of overseas places which would meet the criteria for inclusion in Australian heritage registers, particularly those places which are associated with people or events instrumental in shaping Australia's history. The geographical location of these places, however, makes Australian input into their conservation problematic.

Does State ownership result in better conservation outcomes than private ownership? Is State/Territory ownership of these places necessary or could alternative arrangements be envisaged?

In light the comments expressed in X, the economics of state versus private conservation of historic places means that state ownership does often result in more positive conservation outcomes than those undertaken privately. Government can justifiably overcapitalise on conservation of heritage places where it can be demonstrated that greater community benefit arises from conservation of a place or precinct.

Do State and Territory government agencies follow best practice, such as the use of performance indicators, and if not, how can management practices be improved?

Are the agencies currently responsible for historic heritage conservation on State and Territory land the most appropriate?

Funding and other assistance

Are these the only ways in which governments can encourage greater private involvement in historic heritage conservations? How effective are these policies at increasing private conservation activities? What are the costs and benefits of each of these policies?

Does international experience offer any guidance to policies which might be effective in Australia?

How effective and efficient have grant programs, tax deductions and concession programs been (past and current) in conserving heritage places?

Note that this response deals primarily with local government experience with grant programs.

The unreliable nature of relying on grant funding makes it almost impossible for local government to plan effective long-term management of heritage sites. Because it is often unknown when and if a grant scheme will be announced, more so not being able to rely on being successful in obtaining funding, makes it difficult to plan phases of a project and the order which these should proceed in line with likely funding opportunities. To plan effective conservation programs, managers must be able to correlate short, medium and long-term plans with funding availability. The fact that there may only be a couple of months lead-time to a grant submission, makes it difficult to ensure that a project timeline is adequately prepared to meet that deadline.

Have the criteria and priorities for funding been transparent and consistent, and what improvements could be made?

Can aspects of the funding/assistance processes be improved (for example, prioritisation, transparency, and scope for more innovative approaches)?

Local government approaches to funding and assistance needs to be of a more structured nature, developed with a particular funding body, to ensure that long term objectives are met.

Are heritage agreements an effective way of protecting the State's heritage, and can the process of developing agreements be improved (for example, is there adequate consultation with owners)?

What is the nature and extent of coordination and/or partnerships between the private and public sectors for conserving historic heritage places? Are these partnerships effective means of encouraging private involvement in heritage conservation?