



PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC.

**REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND OBJECTS
(ROHPO)**

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

August 2001

REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND OBJECTS (ROHPO)

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Many members of the Professional Historians Association (NSW) Inc (PHA NSW) are involved in the assessment of heritage sites and objects for listing on the New South Wales State Heritage Inventory (SHI) and the State Heritage Register (SHR) maintained by the NSW Heritage Office and the registers maintained by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), such as their Historic Sites Register and Aboriginal Sites Register. The NPWS are also responsible for Crown land reserved as Parks because of its scenic, scientific or historic interest. Members of PHA NSW have been involved in the assessment and management of many of these places. PHA NSW members also operate in the Australian Capital Territory where heritage assessment and listing also occurs. At a Federal level members have also been associated with assessment of sites for listing on the Register of the National Estate and in the international arena with the identification of sites suitable for listing on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Through this varied work heritage sites (both natural and cultural) that have particularly significant historical values have been identified by the membership. This Register seeks to record sites such as these that are of historical significance.
- 1.2** While the bulk of work of members is undertaken in NSW and the ACT, it is not necessarily limited to that State and Territory. Accordingly, this *Register of Historic Places and Objects* (ROHPO) is an appropriate place to list places and objects of historic significance not only from NSW and the ACT but also the Commonwealth. Because of the scope of work in which historians are engaged the places and objects identified here include items of historic significance to communities of Indigenous, and non-Indigenous origin, and from both the natural and cultural environments. Together, the criteria of the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate and the NSW State Heritage Inventory can be used to inform the assessment of the many types of places and objects that could have historic significance and allows us to address both state/territory and national responsibilities.
- 1.3** ROHPO will be compatible with the NSW State Heritage Inventory and the Register of the National Estate but will reflect the research and interests of the members of PHA NSW. It is intended that the identification and articulation of the associative and historical values of sites or objects will contribute to the enhancement of existing registers at a state/territory and Commonwealth level and ultimately make a contribution to the assessment process and the sensitive and appropriate management of sites.

2. Cultural Significance

- 2.1** Cultural heritage places and movable cultural heritage are valued sites or objects associated with human history which demonstrate or are associated with human activity. They are the product of different traditions and provide

evidence of past physical, intellectual and spiritual achievements. There may be no physical evidence of human activity, but a heritage place may have cultural importance derived from its association with some historical event or sentiment.¹ Pearson and Sullivan's expanded definition of a place has been adopted for the purposes of this register. They state

We define a place as a site, area or region of land that represents a particular focus of past human activity, or that represents a concentration of *in situ* cultural material. A place includes any structures, building or works upon or integral with the land, and any artefacts or other physical relic associated with the land, or it may have no visible evidence of human activity, being rather the site of a past event of importance or the embodiment of a particular belief or legend.²

N.B. 'land' includes land beneath water (e.g. shipwrecks, submerged relics and sites, underwater landscapes, places now beneath dam waters, etc.)

2.2 Movable cultural heritage refers to objects held in collecting institutions and in private hands. It refers to items of cultural material of Indigenous, and non-Indigenous origin or the natural environment that are moveable by nature and that have been assessed as having heritage significance.³ The *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1991* refers to 'objects that are important to Australia, or to a particular part of Australia, for ethnological, archaeological, historical, literary, artistic, scientific or technological reasons'.⁴

2.3 In NSW the process for the identification of cultural heritage sites and objects and the assessment of cultural significance⁵ (the nature of that significance and the degree of significance) has been documented in the *NSW Heritage Manual*. The criteria for listing on the State Heritage Register and State Heritage Inventory are:

Criterion A - An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's (or a local area's) cultural or natural history;

Criterion B - An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's (or a local area's) cultural or natural history;

Criterion C - An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical in NSW (or a local area);

Criterion D - An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or a local area) for social, cultural, or spiritual reasons;

Criterion E - An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's (or a local area's) cultural or natural history;

Criterion F - An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's (or a local area's) cultural or natural history;

Criterion G -An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's (or a local area's)

- cultural or natural places;
- cultural or natural environments.⁶

2.4 ROHPO will articulate the historic values in a range of sites and objects. Drawing from the work of the Australian Heritage Commission, these sites may be:

- extensive in area or very restricted
- discrete (e.g. a single structure) or diverse (e.g. a cultural landscape)
- significant against a single criterion or against a number of criteria
- have a combination of historic (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) or natural values.⁷

2.5 Like the NSW State Heritage Inventory, the Register of the National Estate lists 'those places, being components of the natural environment of Australia or the cultural environment of Australia, that have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations as well as the for the present community'.⁸ The Register of the National Estate currently uses eight general criteria together with more specific criteria, that have a great deal of synergy with those developed for NSW. A place may warrant listing on the National Estate Register because of:

Criterion A - Its importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history

- A.1 Importance in the evolution of Australian flora, fauna, landscapes or climate.
- A.2 Importance in maintaining existing processes or natural systems at the regional or national scale.
- A.3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscapes or cultural features.
- A.4 Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, State, region or community.

Criterion B - Its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history

- B.1 Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon flora, fauna, communities, ecosystems, natural landscapes or phenomena, or as a wilderness.
- B.2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

Criterion C - Its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history

- C.1 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of Australian Natural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or benchmark site.
- C.2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.

Criterion D - Its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (I) A class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (II) A class of Australia's natural or cultural environments

- D.1 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of landscapes, environments or ecosystems, the attributes of which identify them as being characteristic of their class
- D.2 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique)

Criterion E - Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

- E.1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.

Criterion F - Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

- F.1 Importance for its technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

Criterion G - Its strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

- G.1 Importance as a place highly valued by a community for

reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations.

Criterion H- Its special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history

H.1 Importance for close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, State or region.

2.6 As is to be expected there are many commonalities between the SHR and National Estate guidelines, albeit with greater attention paid at a Federal level to the natural environment and with Indigenous heritage encompassed by the National Estate register. Because natural and Indigenous heritage places and objects which have historic significance will be included in ROHPO the significance of a site will be addressed using the broad criteria of both the National Estate Register outlined above and those of the State Heritage Register. Both sets of criteria can contribute to the assessment process and should be used to guide assessments and the preparation of statements that articulate what is significant about a place or object and why, in terms that specifically address the particular identified criteria relevant to a site or object.

2.7 It is recognised that some criteria may only be rarely used in conjunction with historic significance (for example, A.1 - Importance in the evolution of Australian flora, fauna, landscapes or climate). A site or object with this value that is also historically significant would be expected to contain evidence of past climatic, geological, geomorphological, ecological or biological processes and historic significance because of its association with an important scientific figure, the history of science or educational practices in NSW. The rock platforms at Long Reef, near Sydney, where generations of school children have been brought to study marine life could be assessed under both these criteria in addition to aesthetic or research significance.

3. Nature and Degrees of Significance

3.1 An item of **historic significance** would be eligible for listing on ROHPO because it is:

1) Important in the course or pattern of NSW's history. Such an item may:

- provide evidence of significant human occupation;
- maintain or demonstrate the continuity of an historical process or activity;
- demonstrate the principal characteristics of a class of items or environments that have historical significance;

- have attributes typical of a particular way of life, philosophy, custom, cultural practice, system of government, process, design, technique or activity;
- be a significant variation to a class of items;
- be part of a group which collectively illustrates a representative type;
- represent a rare, endangered or unusual aspect of our history or cultural environment;
- provide evidence of defunct custom, way of life or process;
- demonstrate a process, custom or other human activity that is in danger of being lost;
- be a scarce example of a particular style, custom or activity;
- show unusually accurate evidence of a significant human activity or be the only example of its type;
- have a toponymy that demonstrates an historical process or pattern;
- be an environment / land form that has informed or influenced cultural activities

OR

2) Is **associated** with:

- significant activities, events or historical phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the State;
- the life or works of a person or group of persons of importance in NSW's history;
- the principal characteristics of a class of items or environments that have historical significance;
- a particular way of life, philosophy, custom, cultural practice, system of government, process, design, technique or activity;
- a significant variation to a class of items;
- a group which collectively illustrates a representative type;
- a rare, endangered or unusual aspect of our history or cultural

environment;

- a defunct custom, way of life or process;
- a process, custom or other human activity that is in danger of being lost;
- a scarce example of a particular style, custom or activity;
- an item or place which shows unusually accurate evidence of a significant human activity or be the only example of its type;⁹
- a toponymy that demonstrates an historical process or pattern;
- an environment / land form that has informed or influenced cultural activities.

3.2 The first set of criteria would apply when some physical evidence or representation of the object or site exists, while the second set of criteria apply to situations in which there is little or no physical evidence remaining to link an item to the reasons for its significance, for example, the site of a significant building which has been completely demolished.

3.3 An item of **aesthetic significance** may:

- show or be associated with creative or technical innovation or achievement;
- be the inspiration for a creative or technical innovation or achievement;
- be aesthetically distinctive;
- have landmark qualities or
- exemplify a particular taste, style or technology.¹⁰

3.4 An item of **technical/research significance** may:

- have the potential to yield scientific, historic, cultural, technical and/or archaeological information;
- be an important benchmark or reference site or type; or
- provide evidence of past technologies, culture or human behaviour patterns unavailable elsewhere.¹¹

3.5 An item of **social significance** may

- be important for its association with an identifiable group or
- be crucial to a community's sense of place for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.¹²

3.6 While ROHPO's central concern is historical significance, the level of significance may also be considered. The NSW Heritage Manual defines an item of **local significance** as being significant in a local historical or geographical context or to an identifiable local community. An item is of **state significance** because it is significant in a state wide historical or geographical context or to an important and identifiable state wide community. An item of **national significance** needs to meet the criteria outlined earlier and is similarly tied to nation wide historical or geographical contexts or community associations.

4. Historical Significance

4.1 While some items on the Register may possess historic significance as their chief reason for identification as a site or object of cultural significance, items that have aesthetic, technical/research or social significance as outstanding attributes may need to have the historic associations and qualities explicitly drawn out, with the relationships to other attributes clearly expounded. As noted by Pearson and Sullivan

In one sense, all heritage places have some historic value.¹³

It is therefore all the more important to clearly distil the historic significance values and establish links and interactions with other values. A place or an object may be significant because of qualities relevant to a number of criteria. Historical significance will be revealed in the wider context of the site or object's association or reference to broader social, intellectual, spiritual, political or economic patterns or events. While an established association with a particular event can be readily articulated, the exposition of complex patterns or a long history of change and usage are a greater challenge to explicate. The qualities that demonstrate the complexity and history of change need to be identified, protected and conserved.

4.2 The register is ultimately to assist and inform the management of the identified site so that its culturally significant qualities can be protected and preserved. The register entries therefore must clearly state what the particular significance of a site is and explain why it is significant in terms of the criteria.¹⁴ Sites suitable for listing on ROHPO should be those that possess historical significance as defined in the *NSW Heritage Manual* and these guidelines. That significance can be further explicated by referring to the themes developed by the Australian Heritage Commission for the Register of the National Estate and the NSW Heritage Office for the State Heritage Register and Inventory (see the NSW Heritage Office Web site at:

www.heritage.nsw.gov.au).

5. New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

As noted in section 1, listing in this Register is not necessarily restricted to NSW and the ACT within their contemporary boundaries. However, it is preferable that when a place or object is nominated for listing, the historical associations of that place or object with NSW or the ACT should be made explicit. For example, the site of Port Essington in the Northern Territory may be listed on the basis that at the time of its foundation it was a part of NSW, and so it can demonstrate a theme or aspect in the history of NSW.

6. ROHPO Listing Conventions

- 6.1** ROHPO entries will follow the format of the NSW State Heritage Inventory forms. Entries should clearly demonstrate in an analysis of the evidence the reasons for the place or objects listing. It is therefore important that the history goes beyond a description or chronology to present an analysis that justifies its listing.
- 6.2** The statement of historical significance should be succinct and directly related to the criteria for assessment. It is not to be a repetition of the evidence, but an interpretative statement based on the evidence and analysis presented in the history.
- 6.3** Sourcing references that conform to the State Heritage Inventory format are to be included. These consist of in-text references, placed in brackets at the end of the relevant sentence or quotation (i.e. the Harvard method) and a bibliography of source materials.
- 6.4** Illustrations, maps, diagrams and other graphic materials (historical and contemporary) are encouraged.

Endnotes

¹ Michael Pearson and Sharon Sullivan, *Looking After Heritage Places*, Melbourne University press, 1995, pp.5; 13; 22.

² Pearson and Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p.5.

³ *NSW Heritage Manual*, 'Heritage Terms and Abbreviations', Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1996, p.6.; 'Data Entry Guide State Heritage Inventory Database Software, Version 2.0, NSW Heritage Office, p.30.

⁴ Cited in S.G. Foster - Australian Heritage Projects, 'Defining the Significance of Moveable Cultural Heritage' in *Developing a National Strategy Working papers for a public forum on developing a national strategy for the conservation and preservation of Australia's moveable heritage*, Conservation working party of the Heritage Collections Committee of the Cultural Ministers Council, 1996, p.5.

⁵ Significance - the degree to which a place has historic, aesthetic, technical/research or social value qualities

⁶ Heritage Act 1977.

⁷ 'Information Kit Comprehensive Regional Assessment National Estate Cultural Values in Forests', Document 1, pp.1-2, May 1997.

⁸ Australian Heritage Commission, *What do we want to pass on to future generations? An Overview of Criteria and Assessment procedures for the Register of the National Estate*, April 1990, p.1

⁹ *NSW Heritage Manual - Heritage Assessments*, Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1996, p.14; NSW Heritage Office, *Assessing Heritage Significance, a NSW Heritage Manual Update*, August, 2000, pp.11-12.

¹⁰ *NSW Heritage Manual - Heritage Assessments, op. cit.*, p.16.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.18.

¹² *Ibid.* p.20.

¹³ *Ibid.* p.139.

¹⁴ Pearson and Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p.32.