National Cultural Heritage Values Assessment & Conflicting values Report
The wild horse population Kosciuszko National Park - December 2015
Prepared for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service by CONTEXT consultants
Extracts

Cultural heritage legislation in Australia and particularly at the national level focuses on places – sites, buildings, landscapes - using specific criteria to consider the nature and degree of cultural significance inherent in that place, and defining the attributes that are considered to be essential to the retention of the identified heritage values. (*However*) In this study, the wild horse population is considered as an attribute of the place - Kosciuszko National Park – or parts of that place. The National Heritage List criteria and assessment guidelines were used to frame the assessment of cultural heritage significance (page vi).

The Australian Alps (AANP) has been previously assessed as of outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history criterion (a). This assessment is based on the significance of High Country pastoralism and the 'Alps experience' as a historical process, which has contributed to the shaping of an aspect of Australia's national identity. Within this High Country cultural landscape and pastoral way of life, parts of KNP have been highlighted as offering significant evidence of pastoralism. The KNP wild horse population is recognised as a tangible attribute associated with this value, one of a suite of tangible and intangible attributes. (page 89)

Also guiding this project, the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013) provides best practice principles for identifying and managing cultural heritage in Australia. The Charter and its associated practice notes offer guidance in understanding and assessing cultural heritage significance, as well as in managing situations when conflicting values co-exist (page 4).

The assessment of living animals, and in particular an introduced wild animal population as heritage is new ground both in Australia & overseas. The only known wild horse population on a heritage list is the Dartmoor Pony population of England, which are native to the landscape they continue to inhabit. *In the national heritage assessment approach in Australia, the term 'attribute' is best applied*. It is this approach we have taken for this project (page 4).

The brumbies have lived in the mountains for nearly 180 years, and include cattle for over 100 years also. How many native species (plant or animal) have become extinct in this time because of them? NONE! (Forum 1, Bluegrass Consulting 2015:33). (p43)

The Eastern Victorian Alps are part of the Australian Alpine National Parks network and are therefore the most relevant comparison to that of KNP. The Victorian Alps are home to a wild horse population that equally evokes the wildness value theme, in terms of the horses being an inspirational embodiment of spirit and freedom when viewed within the natural landscape. (page 68)

Statement of cultural heritage significance
This preliminary assessment identifies that the KNP wild horse population is an attribute of five values each of which is considered to have outstanding heritage value to the nation *in relation to AANP and/or KNP or part thereof.*

The challenge for park management is to manage the KNP for the full range of natural and cultural values, recognising that some values may conflict – that is that an element of the KNP landscape may hold or express certain values, but may adversely affect other values. This is a relatively common challenge in relation to cultural values and features in natural areas, and less often in relation to natural values in a cultural landscape. Wild horses are an example of the former. (page 92)

Co-existence of values (pages 105/6)
The Code of Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significance Places (Australia ICOMOS 1998) was developed in response to a specific and complex issue faced by Australia ICOMOS; it is set in the context of a number of national and international agreements including the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, (Marshall 2000:31-32). The Code is based on accommodating cultural diversity in heritage practice, advocating a pluralist approach that recognises that there are often multiple values associated with any one place.

The Code defines values as 'beliefs that have significance for a cultural group' and requires 'acknowledgment of and sensitivity to the values of all associated cultural groups'. Each of those multiple values may be held by different people, or some may be shared, and the attributes that hold the values may also be the same or different.

The Code is one attempt to address value differences, recognising the potential for conflict in such differences, and proposing processes that can manage places and values where there are diverse cultural significances.

The Code focuses on understanding values and guides a practitioner in their approach to this task. In particular, a practitioner should 'identify and acknowledge each associated cultural group and its values' (Article 9), 'facilitate the exchange of information among groups' (Article 11) and enable 'each cultural group to participate in the decision-making processes which may affect the place'.

Ultimately the Code advocates 'co-existence of differing perceptions of cultural significance rather than resolution' and proposes the idea of 'accepting compensation as a possible element in managing irreconcilable cultural difference' (Articles 14 and 15).

One of the authors of the Code, Duncan Marshall points out that the Burra Charter does not 'promote a particular conservation outcome, other than achieving the conservation of cultural significance' (Marshall 2000:35) and the same could be said of the ANHC. This is the essential challenge in managing conflicting values.

The Code could become an explicit part of standard NPWS consultation processes where the existence of conflicting values amongst cultural groups is recognised in a planning process, such as in the development of a Plan of Management. This would complement and extend the ways in which NPWS currently actively engages with stakeholders in planning processes.

See http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectsnowies/knp-assessment-conflicting-values-2804.pdf for the full Context review assessment.