

Statement of best practice for heritage asset action plans

A statement of best practice for heritage asset action plans

In the 2019-2021 review of conservation management plans, a lack of clarity about the function and use of conservation management strategies was identified as problematic. They were increasingly being used as mini conservation management plans. One result of the review is agreement that a name change would clarify the differences between these management tools. After consultation, the name Heritage Asset Action Plan (HAAP) was chosen to describe how the role of this document differs from a conservation management plan.

In overview, a HAAP is a simple and succinct document that provides guidance about:

- the maintenance of a heritage asset or item
- a specific aspect of conservation or management
- a conservation approach that applies across an asset class
- a specific element/component of an item.

Purpose of this statement

This statement provides an outline of best practice for heritage asset action plans (HAAPs), which were formerly called conservation management strategies. The statement includes:

- comment on its use
- how it differs from a conservation management plan
- the typical contents of a HAAP
- the objective for the HAAP
- heritage significance to be used in the HAAP
- characteristics of a best-practice HAAP, and
- conservation policies to be used as part of the HAAP.

The statement is informed by the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* and its Practice Notes.

Who this statement is intended for?

This statement is intended for:

- owners and managers of heritage items
- people involved in developing a heritage asset action plan.

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What is the difference between a heritage asset action plan and a conservation management plan?

There are two types of document that can be used to help guide the conservation management of a heritage item.

Heritage asset action plans (HAAP) are relatively simple and succinct documents that provide guidance about:

- the maintenance of a heritage asset or item
- a specific aspect of conservation or management
- a conservation approach that applies across an asset type
- a specific component of an item.

These may be especially suitable for item of local significance but could useful for items of any level of significance.

HAAPs can be especially effective if there is good base information about the item, such as a good statement of significance. If such information is not available, then additional work will be necessary.

A HAAP should not be used in the context of a major change or development affecting a heritage item.

Conservation management plans (CMP) tend to be more detailed, comprehensive and concise documents that provide guidance:

- about a range of conservation processes for:
 - a heritage items of high significance
 - a large or complex heritage items
- where substantial change is contemplated to a heritage item.

CMPs can be relatively short or much longer depending on factors, such as the complexity of the item.

The decision whether use of a CMP or heritage asset action plan should be made by the owner/manager of the heritage item, informed by their expert adviser (where necessary), and in consultation with any relevant regulatory bodies (i.e. Heritage NSW or the local council/government).

The objective for the heritage asset action plan

Heritage asset action plans have more targeted objectives compared to a conservation management plan. It is important to be clear about what the objective is and to structure the HAAP accordingly, so as to successfully realise its targeted role. If more comprehensive guidance is required, then a CMP should be prepared.

For example, the objective of a HAAP may be to provide guidance on maintenance of a heritage item. This means that key information about the condition of the item will be needed, maintenance problems identified, and maintenance guidance provided which is linked to cultural significance and related conservation policy. For example, a HAAP developed specifically to guide

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maintenance should only be used to help with maintenance, and it would not be appropriate to rely on it for guidance about other matters, such as a building extension.

Other examples of HAAP objectives include:

- conservation management guidance for a component of an item (e.g. the roof of a building, or one minor building within a complex)
- current and future uses
- development that potentially impacted the setting of the item but was limited in scope (i.e. the consistent conservation management of historic brick and sandstone kerbing across a park).

Typical scope/contents of a heritage asset action plan

The contents of a HAAP may vary depending on its objective, but all will provide:

- a background statement, including identification of the item, purpose, scope, authorship and limitations
- a robust statement of significance for the heritage item – where the HAAP is for a significant part the item, this statement should detail the significance of that component
- factors that will affect the proposed conservation and management activities
- other policies that will guide or support the proposed conservation and management activities.

Depending on the objective of the HAAP, information on relevant factors might include:

- the condition of the item and maintenance or other issues
- more detailed information about a component of an item under consideration (e.g. the landscape or garden, or one building within a complex)
- a discussion of any significant uses and possible sympathetic new uses
- analysis of the heritage item, and any extension/addition possibilities that would respect the significance of the item; and
- analysis of the setting of a heritage item, and development that potentially impacted the setting of the item but was limited in scope and that would respect the significance of the item.

Other guidance may be provided in the HAAP (e.g. a maintenance schedule provided as an appendix).

Heritage significance to be used in the heritage asset action plan

An understanding of the heritage significance for the item is essential to underpin the HAAP. Where an existing and robust statement of significance already exists, such as from a heritage register like the State Heritage Register, then this should be used.

If a statement of significance is not available, then a heritage investigation and assessment should be completed. For further help, see the guidelines *Investigating heritage significance* and *Assessing heritage significance*.

If the HAAP relates to a component of the heritage item, then an understanding of the significance and contribution of this component to the overall significance of the item will be needed. If such information is not provided or apparent from the existing statement of significance, then a more detailed significance assessment will be necessary.

Characteristics of a best-practice heritage asset action plan

A best-practice HAAP demonstrates the following characteristics:

- it is based on the *Burra Charter* definitions, principles, and process
- it meets all relevant regulations and requirements
- it is developed using a targeted range of expertise and research appropriate to the heritage item and the objective of the HAAP
- it is written in plain English and avoids complex technical language, and makes good use of suitable illustrations
- it is presented with a clear understanding of the audience/s for and users, with information targeted to meet their needs
- it is as short as possible while still including all necessary information
- it provides clarity about the scope of the heritage item and its curtilages. This might also include the significant area associated with the item (the curtilage), and the related area of sensitivity outside of the item (the setting). This should be achieved through brief text or plans
- the objective of the of the HAAP is clearly described
- it identifies key opportunities and limits with the conservation and management of the item relevant to the objective of the HAAP and provides guidance about them. Again, this text should be relatively brief and provide a summary of issues and opportunities
- it demonstrates a clear and logical flow from the statement of significance, to details about factors relevant to the objective of the HAAP, to the conservation management policies and/or other guidance
- it is not written with the purpose of justifying a specific project or development, although a HAAP can provide guidance on how to achieve best-practice heritage conservation within the context of a minor project or development (i.e. to achieve the best possible conservation of heritage significance within the context of the real-world management circumstances of the item)
- research should use existing information about heritage significance, such as a robust existing statement of significance
- details of factors relevant to the objective of the HAAP should be summarised
- it demonstrates a precautionary approach, especially in the context of limited information and research – the strategy is not a full conservation management plan
- it clearly identifies the limitations of the HAAP

Conservation policies as part of the heritage asset action plan

Where a conservation management plan exists, the policies should be integrated into guidance relevant to the objective of the HAAP. A HAAP can also develop policies to guide conservation management but will clearly not have the full suite of policies that might arise in a full CMP.

- The HAAP's conservation management policies should make its objectives and outcomes clear. The policies should not extend beyond the scope established by the heritage significance and details about factors (e.g. if information is only provided about the condition of the item, the policies should not offer guidance about the location of additions to a building). The policies should provide clear guidance about, if not solve, the issues relevant to the objective of the HAAP.

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- Any other guidance provided (e.g. a maintenance schedule) should conserve heritage significance and be consistent with the conservation management policies.

References

[Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and Practice Notes](#)

[Assessing heritage significance](#)

[Investigating heritage significance](#)

[Conservation management plans](#)

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