

**GUIDELINE 10**

Aboriginal site protection and conservation planning



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department of the  
Premier and Cabinet

## Protecting sites

Contacting the Aboriginal Heritage Branch for advice is the first step in avoiding damage to sites. Contacting local Aboriginal heritage committees is also a good way to find out about Aboriginal heritage in your project area.

Common activities which may cause damage to sites are:

- Development;
- Some natural resource management activities;
- Off road recreational vehicle use;
- Not keeping to marked tracks and trails;
- Clearing native vegetation;
- Uncontrolled visitor access to sensitive areas eg art sites;
- Collection of artefacts (a breach of section 23 of the Act).

**The simplest way to protect sites is to identify if there are any heritage issues in your project area and avoid conducting activities on or near identified sites, which may cause damage.**

## Site conservation and management

### Conservation plans

Conservation plans are not required under the legislation, however it is the policy of the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division to actively promote and encourage land owners to develop conservation plans. Landscapes contain a variety of natural, cultural and historical values. The associations may be of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal origin or shared between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The same principles of conservation apply in the management of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Conservation includes all the processes and actions involved in looking after a site or object to retain its cultural significance and integrity. These include the protection, maintenance and ongoing monitoring of the condition of the site or object.

The basic concept for developing a conservation plan is laid out in the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter 1999*. The Burra Charter is a nationally accepted code of conduct defining the principles, processes and practices accepted as a standard for working in conservation in Australia and can be applied to any place with heritage values.

The process of developing a conservation plan should use all the disciplines and experience that contribute to the study and safeguarding of a place. This process includes consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders concerning the significance of the site or object and recommendations for management.

The conservation plan should clearly define the works required to achieve site protection and provide recommendations for maintenance, monitoring and review. Implementing a conservation plan requires a systematic approach including setting a timetable and budget, allocating resources and monitoring the results.

## **A conservation plan may contain the following information:**

- Description of the site or object and its setting;
- Assessment of condition;
- Assessment of significance;
- Identification of the relevant stakeholders; and
- Conservation actions for the long term preservation of the site.

Implementing a conservation plan requires a systematic approach. This includes setting a timetable and budget, allocating resources, consulting stakeholders and monitoring results. Monitoring is important as it allows for review of the effectiveness of conservation programs. Re-examination of the appropriateness of decisions is a fundamental element of the conservation practice.

Conservation measures can incorporate site avoidance, visitor management and the use of buffer zones. Physical works may include the installation of fencing; directional signage and interpretive signage; walk trails and vehicle barriers; re-vegetation and stabilisation. Under the Burra Charter, any conservation works applied to a site should be appropriate and in the case of infrastructure, reversible.

A conservation plan for an Aboriginal site may be useful if:

- It has high conservation value;
- It has high cultural significance;
- It is being actively managed;
- The impact of an activity e.g. public access or use on the site adversely affects its condition;
- A change of use of a site or object is proposed;
- It is a complex site with multiple heritage values;
- Works are proposed that may indirectly impact on the site.

Through the development of a conservation plan, ideas for site conservation are presented in a written format that is easy to understand, providing future site managers with a record of conservation practices at that site.

The Aboriginal Heritage Branch commitment to site conservation is reflected in the Site Conservation Strategy for South Australia project. The site conservation strategy requires the development of conservation plans to guide the protection and management of sites of significance in South Australia. This ensures compliance with both national and international codes of practice in managing sites.

## A conservation plan contains the following information:

Name of Site:

(supplied by the Aboriginal Heritage Branch)

Site Number:

(supplied by the Aboriginal Heritage Branch)

Register of the National Estate Site No. (if applicable):

Site Recorded By:

Date Recorded:

Status:

(Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects or central archive)

Site Type:

Location of the Site:

People with traditional affiliations:

Address:

Informants:

Address:

Land Owner:

Address:

Other Stakeholders (lessees etc):

Address:

Description of the Site:

Background Information on the Site:

Condition of the site:

Significance of the Site under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*:

Aboriginal Archaeology

Aboriginal Anthropology

Aboriginal Tradition

Aboriginal History

Statement of significance: (why is this place important?)

Conservation Strategy: (what is your plan)

Conservation Plan: (how will you achieve your plan)

Maintenance, Monitoring and Review:

Date(s) and results of condition inspection(s):

Conservation plan prepared by:

References:

1.

2.

3.

Conservation plans can be used to form the basis for Aboriginal Heritage Agreements under section 37 of the Act (refer to Guideline 8) for site protection with current landowners and the Minister.



Site damaged by recreational vehicle use, now protected under a conservation plan  
[Supplied by Aboriginal Heritage Branch (DPC-AARD)]

## Who do I contact for further advice?

For assistance or further information regarding these Guidelines please contact:

The Aboriginal Heritage Branch  
Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
PO Box 2343  
ADELAIDE SA 5001  
Phone 08 8226 8900  
Facsimile 08 8226 8999

Cover: Historic Site, north of South Australia [Supplied by Aboriginal Heritage Branch (DPC-AARD)]

Strip: Western Desert Carvings - wooden carvings made by Anangu Pitjantjatjara people. [Supplied by SA Museum]

Disclaimer: This document is a guide only and should not be relied upon to ensure compliance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*. Persons proposing to undertake activities that may damage, disturb or interfere with Aboriginal sites, objects or remains should seek specific advice.