Heritage under Siege: Destructio n of Memory
Rise and Fall of the National Estate

• 1975 - Register of the National Estate (RNE) established

• Places added to the Register were often on the Classified list of the National Trust. RNE had its shortcomings but boosted awareness of heritage. It was a leap forwards.

• 1997 - Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agree that state, territory, and local governments have responsibility for their own heritage

• 2003 - National Heritage List established: “places of outstanding heritage value to the nation.” Plus Commonwealth Heritage List: “heritage places owned or controlled by the Commonwealth”

• Australian Heritage Council replaces Australian Heritage Commission
Rise and Fall of the National Estate (cont.)

• 2007 - *Register of the National Estate* closed. No new entries added.

• RNE now functions only as an archive of information (re some 13,000 items/places throughout Australia):
  ➢ See *Australia Heritage Database* at [Australian Heritage Database (environment.gov.au)]

• 2020 - *National Heritage List* has to-date a total of 119 items/sites for the whole of Australia. It is administered by a federal government in Canberra (its name usually has ‘environment’ in it somewhere). The process of consideration is slow and unwieldy. Emphasis has been shifted to state and local governments.
Rise and Fall of the National Estate (cont.)

- 40 items in Victoria on the Commonwealth Heritage List ie structures owned by the federal government (eight relate to Victoria Barracks)

- 28 ‘listed places’ in Victoria on the National Heritage List
  ➢ List is eclectic and limited
  ➢ Includes several defence sites, national parks, and historic ‘precincts’
  ➢ Few individual buildings and Indigenous sites
  ➢ Does not appear to be a systematic approach

- No items on the National Heritage List in Moreland Council area
  ➢ Pentridge Prison nomination from Moreland Council rejected
Rise and Fall of the National Estate (cont.)

• In Coburg/Coburg North there were 30 items on the former Register of the National Estate including:
  ○ Lincoln Mills, Gaffney Street
  ○ Murray Road Bridge
  ○ Newlands Estate
  ○ Newlands Road Bridge
  ○ Pentridge Prison Complex
  ○ Union Knitting Mills, Munro Street
  ○ Upfield Railway Line Precinct

• In Brunswick there were 38 items on the former Register
Victorian Heritage Legislation

• State heritage matters are completely separate from the Commonwealth
• In Victoria, *The Heritage Act 2017* (Vic) governs the
  ➢ Victorian Heritage Register
  ➢ *Heritage Inventory* (of European archaeological sites)
  ➢ *Heritage Council of Victoria*, a statutory body
• Indigenous heritage is covered by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
• Maritime heritage also has its own legislation
• *Heritage Victoria*, which makes decisions regarding listing, is located within a department of the state government and is subject to Ministerial control
• Heritage matters often intersect with Planning issues and legislation
Victorian Heritage Register

• 15 Listed sites in Coburg
  - Former Pentridge Prison (buildings and the wall, not the whole site)
  - Two bluestone bridges (Merri Creek and Newlands Road)
  - Two churches (Holy Trinity Anglican and former Uniting Church)
  - Former Coburg Railway Line
  - Two cottages (‘The American’ and CHS museum)
  - Coburg Drive-In
  - Baby Health Care centre
  - Part of a school (Infant building, Coburg Primary)
  - Retail building (former Bates building)
Victorian Heritage Register (cont.)

• How comprehensive is the list?
  ➢ 15 items seems low for Coburg

• How representative is it? eg
  ➢ Industrial and commercial buildings
  ➢ Streetscapes and Settlement patterns
  ➢ Archaeological sites

• How much protection does listing offer?
  ➢ Buildings and sites can be removed from the state list
  ➢ Inadequate protection for listed items eg destruction through neglect

• Too much responsibility devolved to local government
The past:
Where is it?
Can you see it?
Pentridge Prison

- 1982: Pentridge Prison listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR)
- 1997: Pentridge Prison closed
- 1998: National Trust (Vic) adds Pentridge to its ‘Classified List’ (NB National Trust listings have no legislative status)
- 1999: Sale of Pentridge to two different developers
- 2001: Heritage Interpretation Strategy prepared for developers: recommends on-site museum
- 2002: Pentridge developer plan to include a European-style ‘piazza’; one 15 storey block of flats mentioned
- 2003-2007: Original developers sell out
Comparison:
Freemantle Prison, WA
World Heritage Listed* and site intact

*Along with other convict-era penal sites in Australia
**Comparison: Sforza Fortress, Milan**

Densely populated city but no high-rise and site intact
Pentridge Prison (cont.)

• 2011: Victorian Heritage Listing (VHR) for Pentridge amended
• 2013: Taiwanese trans-national, Shayher Group, buys part of Pentridge
• 2014:
  ➢ State Government approves ‘Pentridge Master Plan’ in February
  ➢ ‘Pentridge Prison Heritage Precinct’ delisted from VHR. Replaced by a new
    listing under ‘HM Prison Pentridge’
  ➢ Approval given for demolition of majority of H Division’s ‘exercise/labour’
    yards
  ➢ Important archaeological: discovery of circular external cells knowns as
    panopticons; See #1 Pentridge Prison’s Panopticon - Tempus (wordpress.com)
• 2015:
  ➢ Developer ‘Future Estate’ buys land in Pentridge
  ➢ Advertisement re 19 storey block of flats snuck in just before Christmas;
    community reacts to lack of time to lodge objections to Heritage Victoria
Pentridge Prison (cont.)

• 2016:
  ➢ Residents object to 19 storey tower but building is approved (under construction); Formation of Pentridge Community Action Group (PCAG now defunct)
  ➢ Proposal for 8 storey block in Street, in Urquhart Street, next to child care centre. Objected to by residents. Approved (under construction)

• 2018: D Division sold. PACG suggests to Planning Minister that it could be used for museum. Disregarded. Sale approved to private owners. Now used for wine storage.

• 2019/20:
  ➢ Building and completion of supermarket/cinema complex
  ➢ Construction of Adina Apartment Hotel begins adjacent to B Division
  ➢ Two other large towers approved within existing Pentridge prison precinct
Ronald Bull
Mural, F Division, Pentridge

- Ronald Bull, 1949-1972
- Indigenous artist who was an inmate of Pentridge Prison
- Work painted in 1960
- Protected under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Condition deteriorated in recent years needing urgent conservation
Gandolfo Gardens

A casualty of the Level Crossing Removal behemoth

• 1911: Gandolfo Gardens created
  ➢ The indomitable energy and persistence of the residents of Moreland aided by sympathisers…a pleasant and promising reserve adjoining the Moreland railway station is now an accomplished fact. On Saturday over fifty trees…were planted in the new reserve. Judging from the plans this reserve will be an extremely pretty place when the trees are grown to a height at all and doubtless the children of future generations will bless the forethought of those citizens who succeeded in securing for them a breathing space before the neighbourhood became too much built upon. Coburg Leader, August 1911

• 2020: 113 mature trees in the Gardens cut down for the temporary placement of equipment.
Why is this happening?

Economic Expediency

• Australia-wide. Lack of a diversified economic base has led to a reliance on a handful of sectors to drive growth eg:
  ○ Construction (especially Melbourne and Sydney)
  ○ International students (Melbourne leads the way)
  ○ Mining (Western Australia and Queensland)

➢ These sectors have had a major impact on both urban and rural areas eg:
  ○ Demolition of existing buildings for ‘dog-box’ student flats (Melbourne)
  ○ Destruction of Indigenous sites (Western Australia)
  ○ Farmland and Green Wedges under threat (Vic, NSW and Qld)
  ○ Promotion of hastily built high-density structures (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth)
Flaws in the Australian Political System

- ‘Big Australia’ concept has largely displaced other visions for Australia
- Lack of political will
- Deregulation
- Inadequate legislation eg Victorian Heritage Act
- Influence of lobby groups, especially those associated with building, education, mining and property development
- Poor policy-making and lack of foresight
- Problems associated with Federation eg eight different state and territories leading to a variety of different approaches to matters such as heritage
Why is this happening? (cont.)

Culture Wars

• Academia increasingly dominated by ideologies such as ‘critical race theory’
• Spill over into mainstream as shown in the mass media (eg newspapers) and social media (eg ‘Twitter’)
• Attempt to reconceptualise all Western history as colonial, racist etc
• Desire to erase this past (as per the novel ‘1984’) and only having ‘now’.
• Death of empiricism in history
Why is this happening? (cont.)

Australian Cultural Cringe

- Decline in appreciation for the cultural and social contribution of Australian history
- Lack of understanding of the importance of the historic built environment
- Undervaluing the economic value of heritage (as opposed to say ‘major events’). Think of how much food tourism is promoted!
- Attention to, and protection, of Indigenous history still has a long way to go. We are barely at the beginning of this process
Why is this happening? (cont.)

The Cult of ‘Planning’

- What does ‘planning’ mean?
- Why does planning appear to be subordinate to development?
- Who controls ‘planning’?
- Is ‘planning’ merely a political tool?
- What happened to concepts such as ‘garden suburbs’?
Where to now?

- Role of local communities remains critical
- Continuing public pressure on councils and state governments
- Raising awareness of history
- Continuing to do research
- Riding out the storm