

It's Time, Ngara

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In 1991 Davison and McConville described the 'heritage business' as being "subject to constant tension between the demands for bureaucratic consistency and impersonal expertise on one hand and for popular participation and local autonomy on the other" (p. 11). The decisions and debate over the fate of Australian political icon Gough Whitlam's birthplace 'Ngara' more than 20 years on suggests that despite changes to legislation, the chasm between perceptions and procedures used to define built cultural heritage continues to loom large.

'Ngara' (meaning "to listen, to hear and to think"), rose to media prominence on the discovery it was coincidentally scheduled for demolition the day Gough Whitlam died. The following two days saw finger pointing between the Planning Minister, Heritage Victoria and Boroondara Council against a backdrop of public outcry at its potential loss. The decisions, statements and processes that occurred around 'Ngara' give rise to questions regarding the efficacy and consistency of Victoria's planning mechanisms surrounding built cultural heritage and whether they represent public interests.

This paper juxtaposes relevant examples of the birthplace of leaders from Australia and draws on interviews and surveys as well as analysis of documents including legislation, policy decisions and media responses. Using Gough Whitlam's birthplace 'Ngara' as a case study, it explores the legislation, processes and decisions used to determine cultural heritage in Victoria and explores if the systems and bodies in place provide consistent outcomes, adhere to the adopted "best practice" of the Burra Charter and adequately represent community views.

Keywords:

Introduction

The death of former prime minister Edward Gough Whitlam on October 21, 2014 saw an outpouring of tribute for Australia's iconic statesman nationally and raised questions over the importance of his birthplace, Ngara, coincidentally scheduled for demolition that day. Roughly forty-eight hours of widespread public interest and media coverage later, 'unorthodox' decisions were made in regards

to Ngara changing its fate and drawing attention to the consistency of bureaucratic procedure and the chasm between public and expert interpretations of cultural heritage.

This paper concerns itself with the perceived importance of prime ministerial birthplaces, the subjective nature of cultural heritage and the consistency of mechanisms used to enforce it in Victoria. Its approach is through the study of the events and actions that surrounded Ngara exploring both the process and the gap between professional and public definitions of cultural heritage.

Defining cultural heritage

There is no universally accepted classification of cultural heritage (Carter & Grimwade, 2007: 48). In Australia permutations of two phrases derived from the 1974 Hope enquiry into the National Estate (authorised by Whitlam) are often associated (Clinch 2012: 1-2; Conroy 2007: 332) with the definition of heritage – "the places we should keep" (Yencken 1981: 1) and "the things we want to keep" (Conroy 2007, quoting Australian Heritage Commission: 332). "'We want' and 'we should' both emphasise the importance of community consensus in heritage planning" (Conroy 2007: 332). It is this desired consensus – the use of the inclusive 'we' – that informs us cultural heritage should be seen as a form of social action, contested and changing meaning over time (Byrne, 2008: pp. 155, 167) rather than a static reference.

Thus, cultural heritage could be described as a fluid social construct (Byrne, 2008: 155); operating "at a range of different spatial, temporal and institutional scales" (Harrison 2013: 5). "It asserts a public or national interest in things traditionally regarded as private" (Davison & McConville, 1991: 7) while simultaneously being "a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes" (Lowenthal 1997: x). "The notion of cultural heritage embraces any and every aspect of life that individuals, in their variously scaled societal groups, consider explicitly or implicitly to be part of their self-definition" (Avrami 2000: 7) and is "of immense importance in the construction of identities and, therefore, the behaviour of society" (Turnpenny 2004: 295).

Enshrined in legislation for over forty years, the definition of cultural heritage remains problematic (Conroy 2007: 332). Attempts to define it can be found in the widely used Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter) as well as state thematic frameworks such as Victoria's heritage: strengthening our communities which states "[h]eritage is an ever evolving, multi-faceted concept that requires a broad understanding of people and their values" (DSE, 2006b: 11).

The legislation of cultural heritage in Victoria

The current legislative framework for the determination and management of cultural heritage in Australia largely derives from a 1997 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (CoAG)

where it was "agreed that heritage listing and protection should be the responsibility of the level of government best placed to deliver agreed outcomes" (Australian Government 2015a)⁵⁰.

The premise for the repeal of previous legislative framework introduced in 1975 by the Whitlam Government (The Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 and the Register of the National Estate) being that a multi-tiered system of governance (federal, state and local) helps avoid duplication and delivers best outcomes for Australian heritage at all tiers (Lush 2008: 68).

Level	Legal Acts	Registers of Significance	Arbitrators
Federal	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 Australian Heritage Council Act 2003 Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986	Australian National Heritage List Commonwealth Heritage List	Minister for the Environment Australian Heritage Council National Environment Protection Council
State	Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 Heritage Rivers Act 1992 Victorian Heritage Act 1995	Victorian Heritage Register Victorian Heritage Inventory	Minister for Planning Heritage Council of Victoria Heritage Victoria*
Local	Planning & Environment Act 1987	Schedule to the Heritage Overlay contained in the Planning Scheme	Minister for Planning Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal

* Powers of recommendation only. Disputes are raised to the Heritage Council of Victoria.

Table 1: Three tiers of heritage protection (as pertaining to Victoria)

In Victoria, the assessment of heritage of cultural significance is guided by Burra Charter. Written specifically for the Australian context (Smith 2006: 24) it is used as 'best practice' by the responsible authority and arbitrator for state heritage, being Heritage Victoria (HV) and the Heritage Council of Victoria (HCV) respectively (DTPLI 2015; Walker 1996: 1; Clinch 2013: 4). The Burra Charter states "[c]ultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations" (Australia ICOMOS 1999; 2013: 2).

This definition borrows heavily from the Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 (Clinch, 2012: 2) prescribed by the Whitlam government. It is incorporated into both the Heritage Act 1995 (Heritage Act) at Section 3 – used to legislate heritage of state significance and the Planning & Environment Act 1987 (P&E) at Section 4(1)[d] – used to legislate heritage of local significance. These legal acts provide two separate avenues of assessment overseen by different arbitrators based on the level of proposed significance. The exception to this divided arbitration is the Minister for Planning who has a range of powers at both state and local levels through the P&E and Heritage Act. This includes the ability to determine a site as being of state heritage significance (Heritage Act sections 43, 78(1)[a]

⁵⁰ The legislative focus of this paper is built cultural heritage – specifically the treatment of prime ministerial birthplaces. Legislative acts pertaining to movable cultural heritage, indigenous heritage, and etcetera are outside the scope of this paper.

and 78(2)) or at any time amend a local Planning Scheme to include a site under an interim or permanent heritage overlay (P&E sections 20(4), 97b and 185a).

To further operationalise the Burra Charter as a tool of assessment by arbitrators, eight criteria (nine at federal level) were agreed upon to replace former measures found in the Register of the National Estate (RNE) – a term Whitlam borrowed from John F Kennedy (Spearritt 2011). Known as the HERCON criteria "[t]hese model criteria have been broadly adopted by heritage jurisdictions across Australia" (DPCD 2012a: 1) and are used to guide the determination of whether a site is of cultural significance in Victoria at both state and local levels (HCV 2012b: 3; DPCD 2012a: 1).

Table 2: HERCON criteria

A	Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or national history (historical significance).
B	Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
C	Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
D	Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
E	Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
F	Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).
G	Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
H	Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

(DPCD 2012: 1)

Nominated sites must fulfil one of the HERCON criteria. Comparison is made against existing registered examples to help determine if it meets a threshold of significance (DPCD 2012a: 2; HCV 2015a). This threshold is used to judge the level of significance of a place's heritage value to the community (Australian Government 2015b). Wording is subtly changed in these tests to apply to the level of cultural significance (ie: local significance requires a lower threshold than state significance). Arbitration on the significance of local or state nominations is separated. Despite a 2007 recommendation, there is no automatic introduction of interim protection should a site fail to reach the threshold of state significance but be referred for consideration at the local level (DPCD 2007: pp. 116, 118). Instead, separate applications for heritage significance (state and local) must be lodged, appealing to threshold of each one.

Community versus professional perceptions of cultural heritage

Determinations through this legislation as to what constitutes cultural heritage (and at what level) are increasingly becoming politicised with growing awareness and the desire for greater input in heritage outcomes by the Australian public (Freestone 1993; Huxley in Yiftachel (eds) 2002; Perkin 2010). Incompatibility between the bureaucratic traditional rational view of planning (where the goal is identified before the process, ie: through comparison and criteria), and inclusive communicative planning (where the goal emerges through discussion with multiple parties rather

than conforming to a predefined structure) (Olsson 2008: 374-376) occurs as increasingly autonomizing communities wish to protect what they identify as culturally significant irrespective of authorised determination and expert assessment.

This gap between public and professional perceptions of cultural heritage is understood by Victorian governing bodies (Ballarat City Council 2004: 9; DSE 2006a: pp. 12-13, DPCD 2007: 37) but persists despite inclusionary definition (A-ICOMOS 1999; Smith, quoting A-ICOMOS, 2006: 103) and prior acknowledgement that governance needs to both further engage with communities (HCV 2011: pp. 2-3) and "[e]nsure that the recognition and protection of Victoria's diverse heritage continues to be reflective of community values." (DSE 2006b: 19).

In his 2006 paper *Your solution, their problem - their solution, your problem* Spennemann contends that the lack of recognition in planning documents of the fluidity of cultural significance associated with Australia's 'balkanized' heritage (ie: categorised heritage) is problematic (p. 34) – "Clearly, values are mutable and heritage sites that may be evaluated as insignificant today may be regarded as significant tomorrow" (p. 35). Such fluidity is further limited by the requirement for comparative analysis in determining cultural significance, which is likely to contain examples that reflect the bias of those previously or currently in authority (Lush 2008: pp. 68-74; Byrne 2008: 169). Academics critical of the Australian process suggest that heritage decisions are made for the community rather than with it (Gentry 2013: 518; Waterton & Smith 2011: 15; Waterton, Smith & Campbell 2006: 351; Smith 2006: 105), imposing a homogenised and self-reinforcing version of cultural values Smith terms an Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith 2006).

Byrne suggests that "[f]or the staff of many government heritage agencies it is often a struggle to keep in mind, and to remind others, that cultural heritage is about the people, communities and the values that they give to heritage places" (2008: 158). However, "[P]ublic perceptions of cultural heritage can be equally myopic. "[P]ublic opinion, often coloured by nostalgia, omits, consciously or unconsciously, places that do not fit the present value system" (Spennemann 2006: 30). There may antagonism or apathy towards retaining post-war and brutalist structures (such as the Harold Holt Swimming Pool) for example. This nostalgia can also support the common misnomer of heritage being about 'old buildings' rather than "about history and storytelling, a necessary narrative where collective and/or individual occasion becomes memorable." (HCV, 2014: 42).

This question of whether birthplace is part of the necessary narrative of Whitlam, how the determination is arrived at and if it is representative of broader community is explored in more detail below.

Research methods used to investigate the decisions surrounding Ngara

An intensive mixed methods case study of Ngara was used to investigate the efficacy and consistency of heritage mechanisms and the level of public participation in the decision making process. A highly publicised and lengthy case study like Ngara allows inquiry into the actions and perceptions of multiple stakeholders across governance, communities, professional and political spheres and local and state apparatus and qualifies as an appropriate method for testing an extreme case (Yin 2009: 47).

The study triangulated a number of qualitative and quantitative data sources including semi-structured interviews, media coverage, literature (including policy, legislation, frameworks, submissions, guidelines, reviews and correspondence) as well as observation of the HCV panel meeting determining Ngara's inclusion on the VHR. A multi-stage cluster sampling method was also employed with a total of 194 valid responses collected from two streams of informants. 35 responses from Kew (29 of those within a two block radius of Ngara) and 159 responses not confined to municipal boundaries. The survey used a mixture of Likert scales and multiple indicator measures (at face validity) and was distributed approximately 6 months after Whitlam's death.

Purposive sampling was used to identify four participants (two heritage professionals and two intimately involved in the events) who engaged in face-to-face semi-structured interviews and subsequent correspondence. These include an executive committee member of A-ICOMOS, a heritage consultant with over 20 years experience, the city editor of The Age newspaper involved in covering the events and the Kew resident who alerted the media and provided submission at the HCV panel hearing.

Clarification of acronyms

The table below contains a list of acronyms used in this paper as well as a brief description of the function in the context of Ngara.

Table 3: Acronyms

Acronym	Name	Description
BCC	Boroondara City Council	The local government for Kew, where Ngara is situated.
HCV	Heritage Council of Victoria	The deliberative body for determining state heritage.
HO	Heritage Overlay	Protective status for local heritage issued by the Minister for Planning; can be applied as an interim measure or a permanent change made to a Planning Scheme (which acts as the register).
HV	Heritage Victoria	The bureaucratic arm of HCV and responsible authority for state heritage once a decision by HCV has been made.
IPO	Interim Protection Order	A temporary protection order issued by HCV while a site awaits determination.
P&E 1987	Planning and Environment Act 1987	Legislation guiding the inclusion of heritage of local significance in the Planning Scheme.
RNE	Register of National Estate	Former register for heritage of national significance.
VHR	Victorian Heritage Register	The register for heritage of state significance.

Ngara

'Ngara' (meaning 'to listen, hear and think' in Darug language) (HV 2014: 2) was built (and possibly designed) in 1915 by Whitlam's maternal grandfather Edward Maddocks. Tim Smith, executive director of HV describes Ngara as "a single storey red brick late Federation Queen Anne style house, typical of the period in which it was built" (HV, 2014: 2). Whitlam was born there on July 11, 1916 (allegedly on the kitchen table).

Estimations regarding the period Whitlam resided at Ngara span between eighteen months to two years (HV 2014:3; HCV 2015 pers. comm., 18 May). The family sold Ngara on 25 October 1917 shortly before moving in 1918 to Mosman, NSW (Hocking, 2008; HV, 2014). Alterations were made to the house in the late 1950s and early 1960s changing its external appearance (HV 2014: 9) however the original fabric and "overall form of the building has been retained and the plan can be clearly understood" (HV 2014: 9). Whitlam is known to have visited Ngara on at least one occasion in the 1960s (HCV 2015b; Smith 2014).

Despite community knowledge that Ngara was Whitlam's birthplace (Gervasoni 2015 pers. comm., 1 May; Frawley 2015 pers. comm., 3 May), Boroondara City Council (BCC) only became aware of its significance through correspondence from HV advising the site had been publically nominated for inclusion on the VHR. A 1988 thematic assessment of the area had failed to identify Ngara despite using concepts derived from the Burra Charter (Sanderson 1988: 9; Clinch 2012: 148).

Alerted to the potential significance of the site by HV (who received the VHR nomination) BCC attempted to preserve Ngara on the grounds of associative significance (see HERCON Criterion H), revoking demolition consent and submitting an amendment to the Planning Scheme under the P&E. The interim Heritage Overlay (HO) submitted to the Minister for Planning (Minister Guy) and Interim Protection Order (IPO) submitted to HV were rejected and consent for demolition was reissued. Demolition began coincidentally on the morning Whitlam died.

A number of interesting statements and actions were made over the forty-eight hours following Whitlam's death. These include:

1. An erroneous statement by Minister Guy regarding his lack of ability to intervene as Planning Minister (3AW 2014).
2. An assurance by Tim Smith of HV that the death of Whitlam would not change HV's decision (3AW 2014).
3. A choice to lodge a second IPO with HV by Matthew Guy on ministerial letterhead (3AW 2014) rather than use his authority under Section 20(4) of the P&E as requested by BCC.
4. The acceptance of the second IPO by HV along with its enforcement within 24 hours rather than refer the matter back to the minister under Section 32(2) of the Heritage Act.
5. A 'tweet' by Minister Guy that the cultural significance of Ngara was likely to increase over time (Guy 2014).
6. A media statement by Minister Guy that lodging a second IPO was an action anyone could have done.

A timeline on the following pages chronologically details the sequence of events, helping to establish their context and their interrelation. Key participants, stakeholders and organisations have been quoted where appropriate. This timeline can be used to understand the flow and impact of actions as well as pinpoint the above inconsistencies and inefficacies in the process surrounding Ngara.

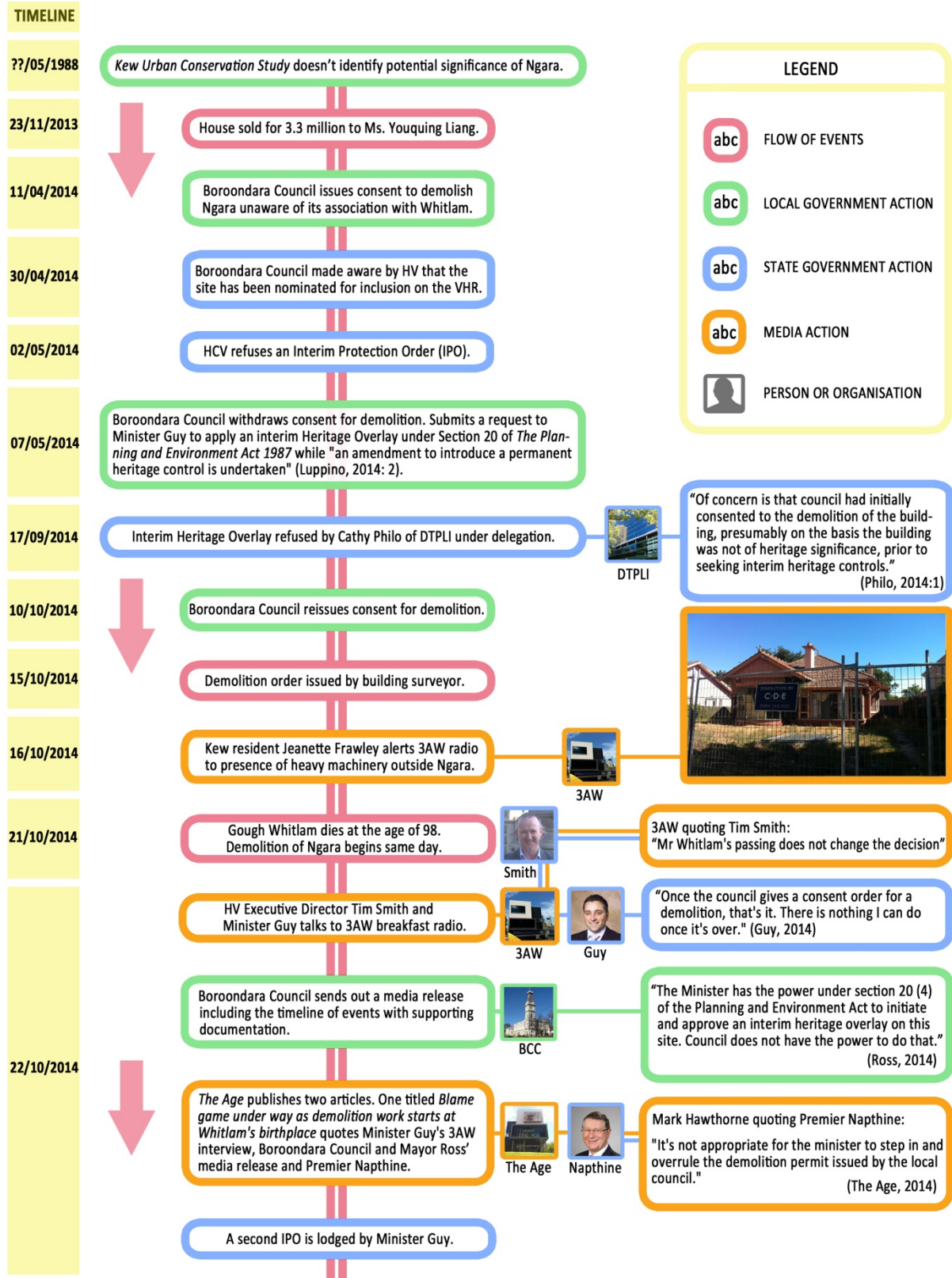


Fig 1: Timeline page 1 of 2

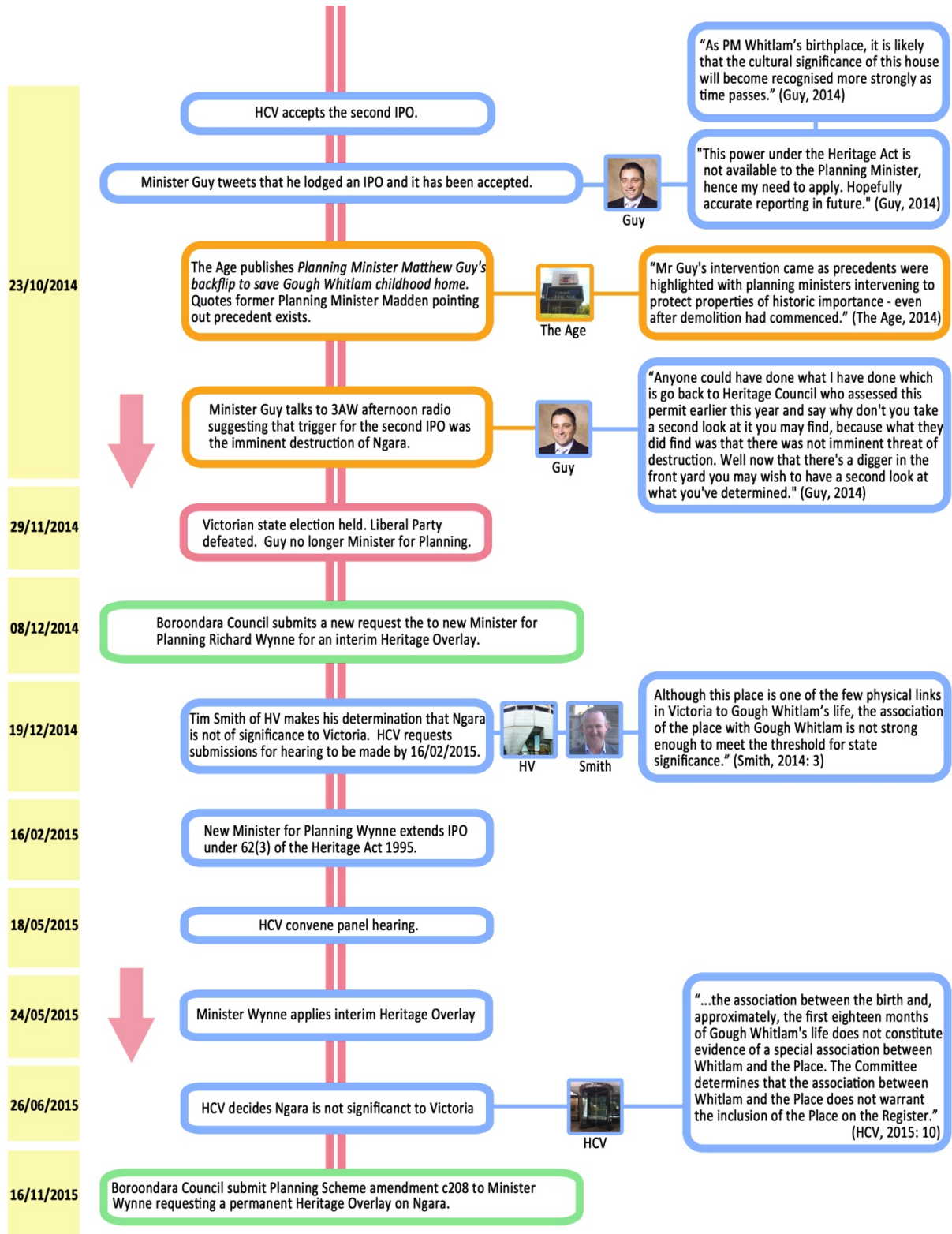


Fig 1: Timeline page 2 of 2

(Sources: Kebede 2013; Melburnian 2006; Myers 2016; Northern Territory Library 2014; State Government of Victoria 2014).

Beyond the failure of the thematic study to identify the potential cultural significance of Ngara, Guy's erroneous statement, and Premier Napthine's suggestion that it was 'inappropriate' for a Planning Minister to fulfil BCC's request to revoke the demolition permit it issued, a further matter arises regarding consistency of process surrounding Ngara.

While Minister Guy's introduction of a second IPO and refusal to use the legislative mechanisms available to him in the Heritage Act and the P&E can only be speculated on, this action nevertheless ensured the fate of Ngara would be deliberated upon after the Victorian state election. The lodgement of a second IPO within twelve months is only admissible if 'new evidence comes to light' or if a site faces imminent destruction (HCV, 2012a: 1). Minister Guy's prior knowledge of Ngara's imminent demolition, submission of a second IPO on ministerial letterhead and statement that "[a]nyone could have done what I have done" (Guy 2014) suggests an ongoing reluctance to facilitate local governance's initial request for Ngara's protection at the local level.

Similarly curious is the decision by HV's Tim Smith to accept the second IPO and not refer the matter back to the minister (via Section 32(2) of the Heritage Act) to allow amendment via the local Planning Scheme. If indeed as Smith asserted, Whitlam's death would not change the decision, his reason to accept the second IPO rather than refer it to Minister Guy (who had the power to legislate Ngara's protection at either state or local level) remains unknown.

The eventual decision by subsequent Planning Minister Wynne (who replaced Guy) to apply an interim Heritage Overlay on the site before the expiration of the IPO instituted by HV was through diligence – no automated system of interim controls exists between the "local and state 'streams' of heritage conservation" (DCPD, 2007: 13). Bureaucratic consistency (or lack of) aside, the question remains as to the public's perception of Ngara significance.

The public response

Unlike other controversial heritage decisions in Victoria (such as those made regarding the Palace Theatre or the Windsor Hotel) there was no rally or prominent social media group demanding action (ie: Save the Palace). Despite this, internet media coverage of Ngara in *The Age* over three days received far more 'views' than multiple weeks of coverage of the Palace Theatre (Lucas 2015, pers. comm., 21 May) suggesting a broader-based community interest regarding Ngara and its potential loss. In moderating online comments on Ngara, *The Age's* city editor "was struck that it wasn't black-and-white, there wasn't just a clear, 'we must save this beautiful house' " (Lucas 2015, pers. comm., 21 May).

This lack of a simplistic kneejerk reaction regarding the fate of Ngara was also witnessed in the distributed surveys (n = 194). Around 60% of all respondents (aggregate) believed preserving Whitlam's birthplace was important and a similar amount believed that if preserved Ngara would be of national cultural significance. The survey results also found that only around 10% of all respondents felt that the decision made to demolish Ngara reflected community views, with around one third unsure and the rest believing it unrepresentative. The cultural significance of Ngara was

agreed by all interviewees (professional and involved) and all parties at the HCV panel meeting deliberating on its VHR inclusion to involve Whitlam's birth (HCV 2015b).

Birthplace as cultural heritage

In the flurry of media comments surrounding Ngara, Minister Guy and HV's executive director espoused two very different views regarding cultural significance. On October 22 Tim Smith claimed "Mr Whitlam's passing does not change the decision" (3AW 2014). Twenty-four hours later Minister Guy tweeted "[a]s PM Whitlam's birthplace, it is likely that the cultural significance of this house will become recognised more strongly as time passes" (Guy 2014).

At first blush, this could be seen as HV seeking to prevent emotive reaction to heritage decisions. There was consensus among interviewees that the death of Whitlam played a role in the public's response to Ngara. However, HV's recommendation against inclusion of Ngara on the VHR using comparative analysis shows that no birthplaces of Australian prime ministers are included (HV 2014: 11). HV makes further comparisons of Ngara with the birthplaces of Mary MacKillop and Arthur Streeton as well as the Victorian residences and holiday homes of prime ministers and other prominent Victorians included in the VHR. In all cases, architectural significance is cited as a reason for inclusion (HV 2014: 15). One of the sites used for comparison – Dodgshun House – is noteworthy. The building inhabiting the site has no association with MacKillop yet is considered significant for spiritual reasons (Criterion G). Despite its inclusion due to spiritual significance HV duly states in their comparative assessment that Dodgshun House "demonstrates architectural significance sufficient for inclusion in the VHR on these grounds alone" (2014: 15).

There are eight separate HERCON criteria and only one needs to be achieved to meet the threshold of significance. The repeated reference made by HV's assessment of Ngara to the architectural significance of Victorian residences of prominent people is at best curious and at worst highlights a lack of ability to interpret non-tangible significance. Criterion H (the only criterion applied for in the nomination on behalf of BCC) does not provide adequate scope to assess architectural significance, nor should it need to given associative significance is being tested.

The identification of political leaders' birthplaces being culturally significant is well established internationally. While presidential birthplaces in the USA are often cited (ie: Richard Nixon's 1913 kit home birthplace in Orange County), Commonwealth examples also exist. These include Mahathir Mohamad's parent's home in Alor Star, Kedah (Malaysia), a section of Mvezo village where Nelson Mandela was born on the banks of the river shortly before his family fled during his infancy (South Africa) and even a structure built on the original site of Wilfrid Laurier's birthplace in Laurentides, Quebec (Canada).

While the international examples above are all considered respectively to be heritage of national importance, currently no birthplace of an Australian leader is considered so. The closure and repeal of statutory powers of the RNE saw the redistribution of responsibility and level of significance of several prime ministerial birthplaces to the "level of government best placed to deliver agreed outcomes" (Australian Government 2015) – namely state or local.

As Table 4 below shows, there is little consistency between Australian states in regards to the level of protection (if any) given to prime ministerial birthplaces (as well as conjecture to some locations). Birthplaces of prime ministers born overseas are not listed as they fall outside Australia's ability to legislate.

Table 4: Prime ministerial birthplaces in Australia

State	Prime minister	Location	Period of association	Heritage status
VIC	Alfred Deakin	90 George Street, Fitzroy.	1856-1863	Demolished, 1978.
VIC	Stanley Bruce	'Stradbroke', 71 Grey Street, St Kilda.	1883-1893	Listed: local HO5 (precinct overlay), Former RNE 11989.
VIC	James Scullin	Believed to be close to a former railway siding, near Langi Kal Kal, Trawalla.	1876-1887	Cairn at junction of Western Highway & Ercildoune Road.
VIC	John Curtin	Believed to be 21 Hall Street or the corner of Church and Hall Streets, Creswick.	1885-1894	Listed: local HO823 (precinct overlay).
VIC	Robert Menzies	Corner of Charles and Roy Street, Jeparit.	1894-1912	Demolished. Now a park with a plaque.
VIC	John McEwen	'Linden', 73-75 Main Street, Chiltern.	1900-1907	Listed: local HO93 (precinct overlay).
VIC	Gough Whitlam	'Ngara', 46 Rowland Street, Kew.	1916-1918	Awaiting decision for HO.
VIC	Malcolm Fraser	'Norla', 16-18 Irving Road, Toorak.	1930	Demolished, 1934.
NSW	Edmund Barton	Believed to be at multiple locations including Hereford Street, Glebe, Sydney.	1849-?	Plaque erected on Arundel Street.
NSW	Sir Earle Page	Possibly Grafton Hospital or Haddon House, Queen Street, South Grafton.	1880-1895	Unknown.
NSW	Ben Chifley	Havannah Street, Bathurst. Believed to be number 29.	1885-1890	Unlisted.
NSW	Harold Holt	58 Cavendish Street, Stanmore.	1908-?	Unlisted.
NSW	Billy McMahon	Possibly 144 Redfern Rd, Redfern, Sydney.	1908-?	Unknown.
NSW	Paul Keating	Former St Margaret's Hospital, 437-441, Bourke Street, Paddington, Sydney.	1944	Listed: Sydney LEP 2012 I1438 (Local).
NSW	John Howard	Possibly Valesco Hospital, 38 William Street, Earlwood.	1939	Unlisted.
TAS	Joseph Lyons	14 Alexander Terrace, Stanley.	1879-1885	Listed: 905 (State), Former RNE 12003.
SA	Bob Hawke	63 Farquhar Street, Bordertown.	1929-1939	Listed: 18237 (Local).
QLD	Arthur Fadden	Ingham.	1894-?	Unknown.
QLD	Frank Forde	Mitchell.	1890-?	Unknown.
QLD	Kevin Rudd	Selangor Hospital, Nambour.	1957	Unlisted.

With the exception of Ngara, all prime ministerial birthplaces listed in Victoria have either been demolished or are considered to be only of local heritage significance. This includes the birthplace of Stanley Bruce, formerly of national significance on the RNE. As such the outcome of Ngara's refusal for inclusion on the VHR is consistent with HCV's comparative driven assessment using 'balkanized' (Spennemann 2006: 34) HERCON criteria. However, the question remains as to whether this reflects wider public perceptions of the importance of birthplace. Surveys, interviewees and state government's response to media coverage all suggest the decision was not in line with community sentiment, despite the lack of public demonstration. Perhaps it's time for Australian heritage bodies to engage in conversation with the broader community about the significance of birthplace.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to explore the legislation, processes and decisions used to determine cultural heritage in Victoria and test if they provide consistent outcomes, adhere to the adopted 'best practice' of the Burra Charter and adequately represent community views through the case study of Ngara. Ngara provides multiple examples of a lack of processual consistency for determining cultural heritage in Victoria – despite adapting a system supposedly empowering the tier of government "best placed to deliver agreed outcomes" (Australian Government 2015). The reflexive actions taken by state governance in the media spotlight suggest a failure to engage effectively with local governance and communities both in the identification and determination of cultural heritage. The fractionalisation of heritage into threshold based, goal-oriented criteria (HERCON) applied for consistency fails to adapt to the fluid and mutable nature of cultural heritage (Spennemann 2006: 35) despite illumination of the broadly inclusive Burra Charter principles being HERCON's *raison-d'être*.

To "[e]nsure that the recognition and protection of Victoria's diverse heritage continues to be reflective of community values" (DSE 2006b: 19), re-evaluation of the processes – not just legislation – should be undertaken. Victorian governance needs 'to listen, to hear, and to think' about the 'places we keep'.

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