

FOR BETTER OR WORSE : MONUMENTS AND SITES IN CHANGING SETTINGS

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Abstract

Changes to the settings of heritage places can be both good and bad! Settings can sometimes be reclaimed or restored, but more often are impacted upon by intrusive development.

Population increases and the desire to contain urban sprawl inevitably put pressure on open spaces and urban centres which have a concentration of heritage buildings. Modern affluence and gentrification of older areas are also underlying reasons for changes to historic houses while catastrophic events, such as disasters, can change settings more dramatically than human intervention.

Planning and heritage legislation is under considerable stress as it attempts to maintain heritage values against the economic pressures of development. In Australia the impact on heritage has led to public outrage and the establishment of resident's action groups to "Save our Suburbs" and to changes in planning strategies.

This paper will examine several strategic legislative models which are directed to conserving heritage streetscapes and views around symbolic monuments and significant gardens while balancing owners' rights to fair and economic use of sites. Case studies, both good and bad, and controversial will be presented. It will also look at possible approaches to post-tsunami reconstruction wherein local values and traditions are maintained in approaches to new building design and construction.