Communities & heritage places
What is loved & how do we know?

Places are important
We all live within ‘place’
Our experiences, memories, identity are connected to place
Heritage ‘practice’ – The Burra Charter & Ask First for example – recognises that ‘special connections (associations) exist between people and a place

Current criteria – HERCON and NHL – require the understanding of community held aesthetic values and associations
But in truth people – the community – are likely to value places for all the ‘heritage reasons’!

Aesthetic
Historic
Scientific
Social
Spiritual

How does Context seek to identify community-held values?

- In municipal heritage studies – ‘community heritage workshops’
- In heritage management plans – through consultation
- In specialist studies of social and aesthetic values...
Social significance means ‘strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons’
• Who are the communities/cultural groups?
• What are their associations? (and are they strong, special, enduring etc)
• Do these associations mean that the place has social significance for them?
• Which aspects of the place have social significance? e.g. fabric, use or activity, meanings)
• How important is the place compared to others valued for similar reasons?
• How can what they value be cared for into the future?

So what methods might we use to find out?
• non-participatory – research, observation
• participatory - focus groups/workshops, back tos, interviews/oral history, community mapping, on-line surveys etc
Aesthetic significance - the power of place to move us emotionally

‘Places exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group’

What are these particular aesthetic characteristics?
Who values them?

An example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broken Hill community</th>
<th>Australian community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous heritage studies &amp; assessments</td>
<td>Artistic &amp; literary sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public art and memorials</td>
<td>Tourism data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major public commemorations</td>
<td>Snapshots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting itself to the outside world</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What are the challenges – as consultants?

- Getting a budget! Social research takes time and skill
- Defining & accessing ‘communities and cultural groups’ – recognising community sensitivities and needs
- Gathering sufficient evidence – desirable to have multiple, confirming data sets
- Interpreting the data
- Being true to the values held by others.