

**Submission
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Tolerance for Change: a policy for guiding change at heritage places

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Conservation Aims to Keep Heritage Significance

Tolerance for change is a tool for assessing the impacts of change on various aspects of heritage significance and consequently, how tolerant elements are to change without adverse impacts on site significance.

The significance of a place may be embodied in attributes such as its fabric, its form, its use, location or in less tangible ways. By analysing how and where the significance is embodied, it's easier to assess the level of change that is acceptable without adversely affecting its significance- its 'tolerance for change' (TfC). For example, if the significance of a site is primarily in its function or use, then its fabric may be more tolerant of change, and conservation management policies and development decisions would focus on retaining its use. Conversely, if the site's fabric is significant, then compatible changes to the function or use of the place may have a high tolerance for change guided by conservation policies that ensure fabric conservation.

Good conservation decisions sustain the significance of a place and guide change, minimising any adverse impacts. A clear understanding of the significance of a place is therefore needed to inform such decisions. The Tolerance for Change (TfC) methodology is based on analysing how and where significance is embodied in the site, and provides a clearly structured approach for guiding change to avoid adverse impacts on significance.

The TfC process has proven useful for proponents and decision makers to determine how much change may be tolerated, by first analysing the significance of each element of a place in simple terms of the attributes of form, fabric, location and function. This analysis forms the basis for understanding the TfC and underlies conservation policies in a CMP.

The TfC process is based on the philosophical principles and the process of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. Using this process, decisions about change, new uses and conservation can be readily negotiated in relevant detail. It is a simple four step process.

1. Why is the place significant and at what level?
2. What attribute(s) of the element proposed to be changed are significant? (eg Form/fabric/function/location/intangible values?)
3. How much change can the significant attribute(s) of the place tolerate without being adversely impacted (eg A sliding scale of some- none)?
4. What conservation policies are needed to guide acceptable change, given an elements assessed TfC?

The rationale for assessing significance attribute by attribute is that these different attributes and values often have differing levels of tolerance for change, and therefore need different policy approaches.

To better understand how and where changes to elements may acceptably occur, a TfC assessment table which indicates tolerance for change can be developed within a conservation planning document.

In summary, the TFC methodology embodies two simple interrelated—but separate assessment tools:

Concept 1. Identification of the specific attributes of site elements in which significance is embodied or demonstrated; and

Concept 2. Evaluation of the amount/level of change that each attribute of the element (and the site as a whole) may undergo, without loss of significance.

Concept 1: Identification of the specific attributes of significance

Evaluation of the specific attributes of any element of a heritage site involves separately assessing its form, fabric, function, location and intangible values. The rationale for analysing cultural significance in this way is that these different values may have differing tolerances for change. Therefore, appropriate conservation policies may allow for a different quantum or type of change which may differ between the different attributes of the same place. (For example, policies may allow for some attributes of a place to be changed a lot, while not allowing any change at all for another attribute of the same place/element).

Concept 2: Evaluation of the amount of change that can be tolerated

Evaluation of the amount of change that an element can sustain without loss of significance involves a judgment that is separate from the evaluation of significance. (If this were not so, then the 'tolerance for change' concept would not be needed—conservation policies could simply be directly related to significance levels alone). Some attributes of elements of heritage places can tolerate a 'counter-intuitive' amount of change—i.e.: highly significant attributes of highly significant places may be able to accommodate a great amount of change, while conversely, attributes of low significance may not be able to be changed much at all without fundamental loss of significance.

Good conservation practice requires deeply understanding the heritage significance of the place to direct the carefully considered management of change whilst ensuring continuity of its heritage values. Making good decisions about managing change to a place whilst retaining its heritage significance is a 4 step process:

Step 1 Establish the relative heritage significance of each element (Exceptional, High, Moderate, Little or Intrusive). Such grading is based on an assessment of the integrity and authenticity of each element. An authentic place is the honest product of its history and of historical processes. Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the place and its attributes. This step defines the heritage values to be retained.

Step 2 Identify which of the attributes of the element contributes to its heritage significance (usually it's a combination)

- **Form** includes design, configuration, details, spaces, envelope, scale, character and infrastructure
- **Fabric** physical material includes landscape elements, interiors, subsurface remains, related contents, artefacts and documentation
- **Function** includes uses, activities and practices; social and associational significance
- **Location** includes the relationship between elements, physical and functional context, setting and views
- **Intangible values** includes traditions, associations, meanings, techniques and management systems, the spirit, experience and feeling of the place.

Step 3 Assess the degree of tolerance for change for each element's attributes (using a scale of low, some, moderate, substantial or high) ie the extent to which key attributes are able to tolerate change without adversely affecting the nature or degree of the significance of the element or its contribution to the site overall.

Step 4 Develop conservation management policies/plans that will provide operational guidance that avoids or minimises adverse heritage impacts for each element. This will conserve and sustain the continuity of the significance of the place, based on each element's assessed 'tolerance for change'.

Degree	Policy
1 Nil to Little tolerance for change	The key attributes (form, fabric, function, location, intangible values) embody the heritage significance of the element and/or its contribution to the significance of the site. The element retains a high degree of integrity and authenticity with only very minor alterations that do not detract from its significance. The key attribute of the element should be retained and conserved with no adverse impact on its significance.
2 Some tolerance for change	The key attributes (form, fabric, function, location or intangible values) embody the heritage significance of the element and/or its contribution to the site. It has undergone some alteration which does not detract from its authenticity and significance. This key attributes of the element should be retained and conserved. It may be changed to some degree providing there is no or minimal adverse impact on its significance.
3 Moderate tolerance for change	The key attributes (form, fabric, function. Location or intangible values) partly embody the heritage significance of the element and/or its contribution to the site, or has been considerably modified. The key attributes of the element should be generally retained and conserved. Moderate change to this attribute is possible provided there are only minimise adverse impacts, retaining the significance of the element or the site overall.
4 Substantial tolerance for change	The key attributes (form, fabric, function, location or intangible values) of the element have relatively little heritage significance, but may contribute to the overall significance of the site Substantial change to this element may be possible, avoiding adverse impacts and retaining the significance of the site overall.
5 High tolerance for change	The key attributes of the element (form, fabric, function, location or intangible values) have negligible heritage significance to the site. There is a high tolerance for change to this element, avoiding adverse impacts and retaining the significance of the site overall.

In summary, the higher the significance or lower tolerance for change, the greater the level of care and consideration required in determining any decision or action which may affect it. The objective is to ensure that the work or proposal, whether temporary or permanent, will reinforce and not reduce significance. To retain and protect the significance of each element, the TfC policy can be applied to any action, change or development..

Step 5 Consider opportunities for change: since conservation is the management of change, opportunities as much as constraints should be identified. The TfC concept has been further developed by Design 5 in its work on the Sydney Opera House Draft Conservation Management Plan 2017, to include a brief list of opportunities for change, providing insights into changes that may be possible ahead. Case study of Sydney Opera House follows, thanks to Alan Croker.

Open Invitation to Comment

The TfC process has grown and developed over time, and I am very happy to receive comments and input.

Sheridan Burke

Case Study: The Sydney Opera House

https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/content/dam/pdfs/conservation-management-plan/SOH_CMP_Interactive_1.pdf

Each of the main elements (and spaces) of the Sydney Opera House has been assessed for its individual significance relative to the exceptional significance of the whole place, including its site. A general policy relating to each of these levels of significance is given. Following the discussion and associated policies for each element or space there are two tables – Tolerance for Change and Opportunities for Change.

The TFC table lists each element, and identifies the tolerance for change under four key attributes of form, fabric, function and location. Tolerance is ranked from 1 to 3, 1 being lowest tolerance and consequently having least ability to change, and 3 being highest tolerance and thus having most ability to change. As a general rule, those attributes ranked 1 contribute most to the significance of the element.

(extract draft Sydney Opera House CMP 4th edition, 2017)

Additional access through the glass walls to the Podium may be considered in accordance with Policy 7.9.

Refer to *Tolerance for Change* and *Opportunities for Change* tables for Bennelong Restaurant below.



4.174



4.175

4.171 Bennelong Restaurant mid level, 2019
4.172 Bennelong Restaurant lower level, 2019
4.173 Bennelong Restaurant, 'Laraki' stools, 2016
4.174 Bennelong Restaurant, lower level, 2016
4.175 Bennelong Restaurant, upper level 2016

Tolerance for Change

element: Bennelong Restaurant space significance ranking: A Publicly accessible, undivided Utzon space used in association with, and supporting the primary function of the Sydney Opera House selected components:	Tolerance for Change 1 = Low tolerance 2 = Moderate tolerance 3 = High tolerance				Further Considerations (to be read in conjunction with the relevant policy section for each element)
	Form	Fabric	Function	Location	
Undivided 3 level space enclosed by exposed shell rib vaults and glass walls together with broad reconstituted granite paved steps	1	1	2	1	Function of space could change (refer to Policy 8.1). For glass walls and potential for changed or additional openings, refer to Section 4.7.3 <i>Glass walls and bronze louvres</i> . Opening through Podium to Box Office Foyer and back-of-house spaces may be reconfigured but otherwise all masonry structure and steps should be unaltered, unless required for improved access between levels as per discussion in Section 4.8.1. Timber platforms could be altered if required.
Broad reconstituted granite clad parapet walls between levels, defining openings in Podium	2	1	1	1	Parapets should preferably remain unaltered but, should alterations be required, they should still read as an integral part of the stepped Podium structure.
Current fitout and décor of Bennelong Restaurant including lighting	3	3	3	2	Current fitout, furniture and décor not original and could be replaced as per policies. Carpet colour should complement exterior materials palette. Alternatively, the floor finish could be altered to match adjacent Box Office Foyer in accordance with Section 4.4.5 <i>Hybrid Utzon / Hall Spaces</i> , if this suited a changed use in the Bennelong space.
Aboriginal poles installation ('Laraki'), 2002	1	1	1	2	Retention in present location preferred to relocation or removal from this space. If relocated, they should be in a public space where their significance and meaning is clear and they are protected from the sun. Refer to Section 4.12.2 <i>Artworks and curtains</i> .
Kitchen to Bennelong Restaurant (within Podium)	2	3	1	2	Essential function if the Bennelong space continues to be a restaurant, but could be modified or the kitchen function relocated.

Opportunities for Change

Explore Opportunities - Bennelong Restaurant	Comment
Items listed as intrusive in TFC table above are opportunities for change. Additional opportunities listed below.	Generally, all changes must comply with <i>Utzon Design Principles</i> and CMP
Revised fitout	Potential for revised fitout and furnishings, if and when required.
Improved indoor / outdoor connectivity with additional / revised openings in glass walls	These could be considered in accordance with Policy 7.9 <i>Alterations to glass walls</i> . Placement would be critical. Refer to Utzon drawings.
Floor levels and configuration	Opportunity to alter timber platforms added by Hall and reinstate original configuration.