

preamble



New Zealand is rich in a unique and distinctive collection of places of heritage value. This heritage includes areas, landscapes, buildings, structures, gardens, sacred places and monuments of special value. Heritage is our story. It is what makes us us. Heritage is our historical and cultural distinctiveness.

Heritage values include both tangible values (e.g. archaeological, architectural, or technological values) and intangible values (e.g. traditional, spiritual, symbolic, or commemorative associations). Heritage is a fundamental aspect of our developing sense of identity. Conservation of the past and creation of future heritage must become a matter of deliberate intent and not chance. Heritage is a shared resource.

The definition of heritage in the Resource Management Act [RMA] is qualified as “historic” heritage. The ICOMOS New Zealand *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural heritage Value 2010* describes “cultural heritage” as treasures of distinctive value that have accrued meanings over time for which they have been recognised. Unlike the “historic” qualifier found in the RMA, importantly the ICOMOS New Zealand *Charter* does not measure heritage value by age alone.

The Resource Management Act (part 2, section 6) identifies matters of national importance. At 6(f) the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, or development is established, however this has not been supported by an associated national heritage policy statement.

The Charter of the United Nations and its *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* establishes culture (and cultural heritage) as a human right, giving rise to a need for access to cultural heritage for all. Article 7 of the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2001* recognises that:

*“heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations...”*

New Zealand shares a responsibility with the rest of humanity to safeguard its places of cultural heritage value for present and future generations. Specifically, the people of New Zealand have a particular way of perceiving, relating to, and conserving their cultural heritage values. By using an emerging skillset to appropriately recognise our heritage we can be both more discerning about what it is and more determined about conserving it. However New Zealand cannot afford to save everything of heritage value.

The general lack of education available in New Zealand with respect to heritage, its recognition and management has led to a cultural expectation that tends to consider heritage as an inconvenient constraint to property value, development, and growth. This cultural psyche does not however match the increasingly strong public demand for heritage protection

International evidence shows the economic benefits to society from an appreciation and regard for heritage. Initiatives which encourage and advance public education and expectation in the benefits and economic advantage to shifting the cultural belief in our heritage to one of opportunity should be promoted at a national level.

