

## Research in Australian Historical Archaeology: cutting edge or cutting corners?

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*This paper explores why broad frameworks of archaeological research and sources for comparative evaluation and analysis have not been more successfully developed in Australia,<sup>1</sup> despite numerous sites having been dug and destroyed. The capacity of single-site research designs is affected by the absence of agreed research frameworks and wider-ranging syntheses of research accomplished to date. During the past three decades the need to establish these tools as critical priorities for Australian historical archaeology has been raised often and yet they remain unavailable. This lacunae affects the success of archaeological heritage management generally and its ability to meet the needs of all those who should benefit from it. The author suggests that improved support for and use of archaeological management plans (AMPs) can significantly improve this circumstance. As pre-emptive mechanisms AMPs offer appropriate means to not only achieve more effective management outcomes, but also to initiate integration and synthesis of archaeological research for different regions and areas.*

This paper aims to re-assert the relevance and applicability of archaeological research frameworks and comparative evaluation sources<sup>2</sup> within the development-driven context, where the basis for proper management of the archaeological resource requires us to have explicit and defensible frameworks to guide decision-making, analysis and interpretation. The paper briefly identifies the purpose and context of these research tools and suggests reasons why they remain absent, despite recognition of their value. It then proposes some options to assist in reviving debate and pursuit of these mechanisms as a means for Australian historical archaeology to better benefit all stakeholders.

A significant value of a research agenda, whether broad-scale or site-specific, is its ability to 'improve research efficiency' by matching realistic questions and methods to the resource being investigated, thus enabling worthwhile outcomes for all stakeholders (Goodyear et al. 1978:161 author's italics). When archaeological investigation is required as part of the planning consent for new developments the expense outlaid by developers and landowners is only justifiable if the investigation contributes meaningful, publicly accessible information. Otherwise, why should private developers have to pay for an exercise of negligible value? Cost effective archaeology means developing a carefully planned program to assist in determining where, why and how to investigate.

The form of research frameworks and designs are critical issues that have influenced and divided urban archaeology in Australia. Historical archaeologists recognise the importance of research strategies in any recovery and interpretation of archaeological evidence, their relevance having been discussed and promoted at length since the 1960s. In Australia, particularly from the 1980s to the mid 1990s, archaeologists argued for the adoption of vanguard 'umbrella' frameworks to guide historical research, as evidenced by an extensive local literature (for example Bowdler 1981; Birmingham and Jeans 1983; Mackay 1983; Pearson 1984, 1989; Temple 1988, Ireland 1989; Thorp 1992; Lydon 1993). Less consistent discussion and promotion of research frameworks or resources that allow comparative evaluation to be undertaken has occurred in more recent years (for exceptions see NSW Heritage Office 2000; Iacono 2002, 2005; Murray 2002; Casey 2004).

As an already established and recognised management tool, archaeological management plans (AMPs)<sup>3</sup> provide an

ideal opportunity to integrate the valuable information that research frameworks offer, either as an AMP component or as associated studies. At the same time this provides means to revitalize and revise AMPs via a research base that encourages good land management decisions and positive returns for all stakeholders. The pursuit of AMPs in tandem with the development of research frameworks also provides an opportunity to prompt the successful inclusion of significant sites on National or State heritage registers, which was an intended outcome of AMPs when first introduced in Australia (Ireland 1989:38; Temple 1989:11).

It is important to acknowledge that there are several interrelated problem areas within, yet not limited to, Australian historical archaeology that require attention and improvement including, as argued here, the establishment of research frameworks and comparative data resources. Not least of these are reasonable sources of funding, adequate student training and professional work standards, transparent processes to monitor the quality of archaeological projects and established standards for site recording, collection and storage management. For instance, strategic tools such as research frameworks and resources for comparative evaluation will of course be less effective if the data records of individual site archives (integrated data from artefact catalogues, site records and reports etc) are largely incongruent and thus unable to be used for comparative analysis. As recently raised by Crook et al. in relation to artefact catalogues in particular, the existing lack of consensus on basic recording standards for core site records:

is a significant impediment to the further development of historical archaeology. In particular, it restricts the ready exchange of information about sites and assemblages, and makes it virtually impossible to undertake the kind of inter-site comparison that will facilitate wider syntheses of the archaeological record of post-contact Australia (2002:26).

These associated and overlapping issues require considerable attention and constructive debate in the search for long-term solutions. This paper focuses on only one of these matters with the hope of sparking renewed consideration of the integral role that research frameworks and associated tools such as comparative evaluation databases can play in guiding the objectives and outcomes of historical archaeology.

In addition, although there is a variety of ways to attain

archaeological data this paper focuses on excavation, as this is the predominant technique used in development-led archaeology to realise research potential (also see Roskams 2001:1; Murray 2002:11). The focus on excavation as the predominant technique used in compliance-based archaeology is an issue in itself and is a consequence of existing legislative procedure and development pressure that, in many cases, sees decisions about how to deal with threatened archaeological remains being made before adequate assessment and archaeological management has been undertaken and its outcomes integrated into a site's planned development. That is, the decision to 'let a site go' often takes precedence over findings that may recommend retaining cultural remains undisturbed. As pre-emptive planning tools, well-developed AMPs are integral to improving this predicament.

How the 'significance' of archaeological heritage is assessed also has a major bearing on which places are conserved or excavated and how they are managed. The kinds of research questions that are developed for those places also affect management decisions about their future. Rather than review in detail debate about concepts and criteria of significance, this paper will address some issues that have hindered the development of research frameworks and suggest options that provide an arena to advance issues that are intrinsic to significance assessment in Australia.<sup>4</sup> Research frameworks that integrate archaeological and broader heritage management processes are seen here as springboards upon which more meaningful significance assessment values may be debated and refined.

### **Research designs and frameworks**

Research designs and frameworks provide platforms for enquiry into the kinds of questions that archaeological investigations can ask and answer. They establish ways to address those questions via appropriate methods of excavation and material culture analysis. As analytic tools, their purpose is to develop responsive research approaches that are commensurate with available resources of funding and time so that, as archaeological remains are destroyed by excavation, the recovered data will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the past.

### **Research design**

A research design is a process involving an excavation methodology established to respond to and test a series of questions (or problem domains) aimed at a specific site or area.<sup>5</sup> A sound research design should present these questions within a well argued conceptual framework that identifies the research goals, implications of previous research, specific hypotheses that the investigation may test and their potential implications and an explicit method of analysis that can tease out issues and responses to the questions it poses (Raab 1977; Fowler 1982:22–24; Salwen 1973).

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORKS AND OTHER BROAD-SCALE RESEARCH STRATEGIES**

A research framework<sup>6</sup> brings together information from a range of projects across a geographical area or landscape to provide a broader regional context for site-specific investigations. These frameworks can guide individual site investigations by providing background data that stimulate (not replace) and refine a project's theoretical and

methodological research base, thus helping to place individual investigations within broader and more meaningful cultural and social contexts.

Research frameworks can provide the focus needed to identify research and management priorities in urban areas where archaeology has become a necessary planning consideration. Such strategies are an integral component of archaeological management in England, where English Heritage co-ordinates a variety of ongoing research programs including regional, national and local research frameworks and extensive urban strategies (Olivier 1996; English Heritage 1997, 2003). Similarly, in Ireland the Urban Archaeology Survey<sup>7</sup> is regarded by archaeologists, planning officers and the like as 'the source most commonly used for considering research and conservation issues when dealing with particular cases under the planning procedures' (Lambrick and Spandl 2000:51).

Such broad based overview documents have an important role in urban archaeological management, yet they are uncommon in Australia. Similar archaeological strategies have been proposed here in the past, but not initiated.<sup>8</sup> They require a basic three-step process: to examine and synthesise existing data, identify knowledge gaps and establish research priorities (English Heritage 2003:9). These studies, whether stand-alone or integrated into AMPs, are valuable long-term management tools that can:

1. Appraise the known resource in a inclusive rather than piecemeal approach.
2. Utilise the cumulative knowledge base of past archaeological projects.
3. Guide and refine the research base of site-specific projects.
4. Locate site-specific projects within a broader and more meaningful context.
5. Assist 'big picture' conception of the character and history of urban centres.
6. Allow State heritage agencies to focus resources on the most deserving sites.

Research frameworks are not the answer to all issues that affect the quality of research results and public outcomes achieved in urban archaeology. However, as Australian historical archaeologists are all too aware, the mass of data that is rapidly accumulating from commercial projects is greatly under-exploited as a resource for comparative research. Commercial investigations that demonstrate 'lack of funding, parallel lack of statutory power and absence of research focus' are unable to present detailed syntheses of investigation results or adequate artefact analysis (Casey 2004:30). This then affects the ability of other projects to utilise that data for contextual analyses because of the additional research needed to make sense of it (and see Lawrence 1998a; Mayne and Murray 2001; Crook et al. 2002:28).

### **Core research issues in development-led archaeology**

In Australian urban archaeology many of the factors that influence the quality of research and investigations interlink and overlap. Some of the more recognised issues that arise within archaeological heritage management practice are:

- The administrative demands on State agency archaeologists and the political, economic and timing pressures associated with development and urban planning result in a focus on short-term solutions over more strategically oriented long-term gains.
- The absence of focused research frameworks and

syntheses for historically significant areas based on evaluation of evidence from past projects, together with the availability of centralised sites databases to adequately appraise the remaining resource and provide ‘an effective system for allocating the archaeological dollar to the most deserving sites, rather than those with the greatest development pressure’ (Mackay 1996:135).

- Development pressures rather than research priorities prescribe which sites are investigated.
- A lack of consensus within the profession regarding the form of research frameworks and what is required to produce ‘cost-effective’ archaeological outcomes.
- Archaeological recording and report standards. The basic retrieval of data in order to comply with legislative requirements is not a justification for unimaginative, rote or overly ambitious research designs and investigations. Adequately funded projects that contribute little to the knowledge base, due to poor research design, analysis and inadequate response to the research questions, are professionally unsupportable and indefensible.

### **Past contributions to the research framework debate**

The existing keyhole (site-by-site) approach to urban site investigations, combined with a general absence of overarching research frameworks, bears significantly on the orientation and clarity of archaeological research aims and priorities, particularly in development-driven investigations, where project research designs are not always appropriate to the resource under investigation. The situation is little changed from 1992 when Wendy Thorp outlined this predicament, highlighting the need to rationalise site selection via research frameworks. She described the ensuing practice in Australian commercial archaeology as analogous to the maxim of ‘the tail wagging the dog’:

Archaeological sites are not chosen to fit a pre-determined framework of investigations and investigations of sites do not, and at this time cannot, tailor their programmes to provide useful, new or complimentary evidence to that produced from comparable sites. Chance development provides a lucky dip of information and the disparate evidence that comes from this process has no outlet.

Furthermore the significance assessment process is hamstrung by this lack of context and...consolidated research. If both these issues were resolved then public and corporate resources could be tailored to those sites of maximum need and sites that had limited or no useful contribution could either be left or managed to minimal requirements. Economy of resource with a clearly defined objective is also certain to breed a better relationship between the conservation and development industries (Thorp 1992:16).

Despite these concerns, archaeologists have sought to address these issues in Australia. Murray and Allen (1986) emphasised the need for stronger ‘theory building’ to reinforce the significance of research for historical archaeology, particularly in reference to the proliferation of ‘theoretically unarticulated’ themes and checklists created by archaeological managers. Karskens and Thorp (1992) offered a research-based approach to urban archaeological investigations that sought to integrate archaeology and history, proposing a series of broad historical questions that have since shaped the research inquiries of other urban Sydney site investigations (see Godden Mackay and Karskens 1999; Bairstow 1994). Lydon sought to forge closer links between ‘general questions and theories and empirical data’ (1993:35) by identifying

certain research domains emerging from investigations undertaken in Sydney’s Rocks area, stressing the need to locate archaeological projects within wider research frameworks. Acknowledging the limited analytical contribution of urban archaeology that results when development pressures rather than research priorities determine which sites are investigated, Mackay also stressed the need for improved predictive planning predicated on ‘more rigorous selection of sites to be excavated and co-ordination of cohesive regional research frameworks by the state’ (1996:124).

## **RESEARCH ISSUES AND STATE HERITAGE AGENCY PROCESSES**

### **Statutory agency resources**

Legislative requirements and heritage agency resources have a major bearing on the effective articulation of research strategies and the quality of project outcomes. As Pearson and Sullivan emphasise ‘proper management planning is the keystone of effective heritage place management, in that adequate inventory, assessment, and where appropriate, conservation of the resource will not consistently take place without it’ (1995:188). The statutory compliance process has perceived limitations that, combined with the absence of transparent evaluation procedures to monitor the standard of research designs, tend to result in inconsistent approaches to archaeological research. The following discussions highlight some of the more critical issues within the statutory system that hamper effective approaches to archaeological research.

Archaeology constitutes a small fraction of the management responsibilities and priorities of statutory heritage agencies. Administrative demands on State agency archaeologists and the political, economic and timing pressures associated with development and urban planning leave little time to address long-term strategic goals and issues. Initiation and promotion of strategies such as broad-scale research frameworks need to come from within these statutory agencies as they will be responsible for their implementation.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, ongoing management and evaluation of these schemes and of site-specific projects needs to be monitored via clear processes to help ensure that quality outcomes—new insights, positive management, presentation and interpretation—are being achieved in heritage archaeology (Murray 2002:13), without which there can be no reinvigoration of the research outcomes.

### **A NSW database of historical archaeological sites**

Most Australian State heritage agencies maintain registers and databases, such as the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR), that identify State significant heritage items for their protection and appropriate management. The NSW State Heritage Inventory (SHI) records information for 20,000+ heritage items (1506 of which are on the SHR). Although the sites contained in NSW statutory lists (local environmental plans etc) and non-statutory inventories (heritage studies, AMPs, etc) are also meant to be included, at the present time the only archaeological sites in the SHI that derive from archaeological plans are those identified in the *Parramatta Historical Archaeology Landscape Management Study* (hereafter PHALMS) (Godden Mackay Logan 2000). Thus, where there are records of NSW historical archaeological sites and places, these are dispersed across various registers and inventories rather than being consolidated into a single, publicly accessible database.

A consolidated site database is useful for reasons other



than protection. It allows the extent of the resource base to be identified, quantified and interrogated to extract comparative site data about known and potential sites and site types across the State that can facilitate significance evaluation based on comparative assessment. The data also provides the basis to develop research frameworks and reduce duplication of research between archaeological projects.

Although such a publicly accessible database is not presently available in NSW, since 2003 the Heritage Office Database (HOD) has functioned as an in-house mechanism for recording archaeological sites, reports and procedures. The database has helped to integrate archaeology into the broader heritage management process by maintaining records for the range of heritage site types within a single database. The Heritage Office aims to place HOD 'on-line' on its web site in the future (Lavelle 2004). Access to this information would provide an essential resource for archaeologists and others to search for comparative sites when undertaking assessments, enabling these studies to contribute to a better understanding of the range and types of historical archaeological assets in NSW.

### **Evaluating sites, evaluating processes**

Two significant and related issues concerning research agendas within AMPs remain unresolved despite the efforts of PHALMS and earlier management plans, in their more restricted capacity. First, in pointing out that 'cohesive research design does not a worthwhile project make', Mackay emphasised the need to apply AMP data in a way that 'facilitates selection of appropriate sites for excavation in the first place' (1996:134). The research data generated by AMPs can help to guide these considerations. As Johnson suggests, historical archaeology needs to start focusing its resources on 'gathering a more synthetic knowledge of our material' (1999a:34) in order to understand an area's archaeological landscape rather than concentrating on single site research projects.

Second, AMPs that include a research component usually accentuate the need for regular review and reappraisal of the research goals and hypotheses that constitute its conceptual research framework. However, those who commission and administer the plans have not adequately addressed the problem of how to do this. Nor do the plans themselves offer explicit means to undertake this process.<sup>10</sup> Herein lies a key challenge for contemporary archaeological heritage management globally—to shift current thinking and emphasis from a reactive process spurred by development and regulation to an ethos in which research objectives underlie archaeological management decisions. As Baker suggests for England, 'the truth is that a different kind of regulation is needed in order to achieve a stable working relationship between "knowledge" and "profit" motives' (2002).

Murray called attention to this challenge in 2002. Describing it as a crossroads, he argued that we must progress beyond extolling the virtues of research designs and frameworks or even, as endeavoured by PHALMS, developing constructive strategies that 'build evaluation into the archaeological process' (2002:12). As he emphasised, the critical need is to target feasible funding and management strategies to support this evaluation process, without which research designs and frameworks are largely ineffective. Like research frameworks, detailed evaluation of site-specific research designs rarely occurs after completion of archaeological projects. Murray attributes this absence of empirical review not so much to a lack of necessary knowledge base, but rather to the funding and time resources allocated to undertake these processes (2002:12). That is, archaeologists are often too busy investigating sites to step

back and review the findings or apply them more broadly, and State agency archaeologists lack the time, resources and policy requirements to evaluate reports.

## **AUSTRALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORKS: WHY THEY ARE ABSENT**

### **Consensus within the profession**

A lack of consensus within the discipline of historical archaeology about how to approach the formation of research strategies has significantly impeded their active pursuit. Carver aptly describes the problem as being 'that research criteria are very hard to gather, to prioritise, to agree, to tie down, and to apply in systems of pre-emptive curation' (1996:50). Australian historical archaeologists generally agree that particular archaeological resources can be identified as significant or have the potential to be so, such as early convict sites. Dissent in opinion seems to relate to how archaeological significance of a place is adequately articulated and interpreted. Some believe that the legislative process requiring a research design for excavation, at least in NSW, is excessive (Thorp 1992) while others are convinced that without frameworks of questions to guide project investigations, particularly those driven by development, basic retrieval of data cannot meaningfully add to our comprehension of past lifeways (Mackay and Karskens 1999:20, Connah 1983). Moreover, as Murray notes there are others still that, unconcerned with such issues, conduct their investigations in a manner that 'leaves the theoretical underpinnings of the research untouched by an encounter with the empirical' (2002:12).

In the 1992 Melbourne AMP, Lavelle and Mider (Fels et al. 1992:16) acknowledged that:

in the absence of any clearly defined or agreed research objectives for urban archaeology... it is unrealistic to expect that the investigation of the resource will be instigated or co-ordinated through the mechanism of overall research designs and strategies in the immediate future.

Many urban investigations continue in Australia without clearly expressed research aims nearly 15 years on. The amount of locally published literature on the subject attests to a general agreement by Australian historical archaeologists of the need for broad scope research strategies. Diversity of approaches, which can be a good thing, has caused the dissent in opinions. Some commitment is needed from historical archaeologists to see past our differences and collaborate to prepare at least a preliminary strategy or model, as has been successfully accomplished via urban research strategies and research programs operating in many regions of England and Ireland.

### **Identifying 'cost-effective' research priorities**

Many archaeologists agree that to some extent legal compliance requirements rather than research values now compel archaeological investigation projects. In development-led archaeology, projects are commonly reduced to a series of technical mechanisms concerned with 'the identification, recording and removal of archaeological entities, the production of a report and the creation of an archive' (Cumberpatch and Blinkhorn 2001:41). This approach concerns many archaeologists, apparent from regular discussion in archaeological publications, Internet forums and conferences around the world, in particular because it has

shifted the fundamental goal of archaeological practice away from theoretically grounded research methodologies.

Added to this, various stakeholders, particularly developers and landowners but also some archaeologists, perceive detailed archaeological research within development-driven investigations as being 'beyond the remit of developers', suggesting that the development industry should not be responsible for subsidising what is essentially a research-based discipline (the issue of accountability is also raised in Thorp 1992; NSW Heritage Office 2000:26).

A significant body of archaeological evidence resides in the numerous stand-alone investigations undertaken in urban areas of Australia. Yet, for many of these predominately development-led projects critical analysis, comparative intra-site evaluation, or interpretation of recovered material remains largely incomplete. Australian archaeologists including Pearson (1981:11), Lydon (1993:34); Lawrence (1998a:8); Mayne and Murray (2001:2), Murray (2002); Crook et al. (2002); Colley (2002:47); Casey (2004) have noted the paucity of reports that provide detailed analysis. Thus, information obtained from those sites is rarely fed into subsequent investigations as this would require consultants to undertake 'considerable additional analysis and research' (Casey 2004:30), not to mention finding additional funds to do this, as arguably the research costs from one site should not be borne by the developer of another.<sup>11</sup>

For projects where archaeology is a necessary component, developers and landowners generally associate value for money with having archaeological investigations undertaken in a manner that adequately complies with compulsory legislative requirements (and usually at the best possible price). However, as Andrews and Barrett and others also suggest, it is actually the research that developers should be funding 'because only by evaluation of field results against research priorities can a cost effective programme be managed' (1998:40, also Schiffer 1975:4; Morris 1998). 'Cost-effective' archaeology depends upon investigation projects having a sound research base. Integrated AMPs and broad-scale research frameworks can reduce costs associated with unnecessary investigations by linking relevant research pursuits with worthwhile site investigations to ensure that these projects add to the knowledge base. In addition, although landowners may have a legal right to remove archaeological remains, other groups can, and often do, have non-financial interest in the resource, such as local communities and the interested public. Stronger emphasis needs to be placed on the social responsibility of developers and landowners to fund targeted research and analysis when the wider community is to lose irreplaceable resources.

### **Commercial archaeology priorities**

Australian archaeological heritage management has become an increasingly more profitable and economically viable occupation over the past ten to 20 years due to the combination of legislated protection for cultural heritage remains and the pace of urban development. In parallel, appeals for research frameworks to guide decisions about 'the most deserving sites' were frequently articulated during the 1980s to mid 1990s but have since declined (NSW Heritage Office 2000 is an exception). Is this lack of progress or consensus regarding the establishment of research frameworks and particularly comparative evaluation processes an indication that some archaeologists may not actually want this level of assessment as it would 'ringbark' commercial practice? That is, if strategies are established that suggest which sites deserve focused resources, far fewer investigations would be undertaken, resulting in fewer commercial projects.<sup>12</sup>

## **SOME WAYS FORWARD: STRATEGY OPTIONS FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

### **Urban research strategy program**

Australian historical archaeology would benefit from adapting an overarching urban research strategy akin to the English Heritage program, *Exploring Our Past* (2003), discussed earlier. Because archaeology is largely State administered, relevant heritage agencies would need to consider strategic programs that incorporate the following stages:

1. Identify the areas where material remains of the past are at greatest risk from development.
2. Undertake archaeological assessments for these areas to assist the development of research agendas and strategies, incorporating comparative analysis based on records of past site investigation.
3. Undertake AMPs that utilise these syntheses and assessments.
4. Encourage commercial/public sector/academic collaborations to guide these projects.
5. Undertake research projects on specific subjects that fill in knowledge gaps identified in stage 2 projects.

In NSW, the Heritage Office<sup>13</sup> has recently commenced the first of these stages as part of a project to provide guidelines and a model brief for the preparation of archaeological management plans. Once the guidelines are complete it is envisioned that stages 2–5 will be undertaken for a number of targeted 'high priority' historic areas, with the support of responsible local councils and other relevant stakeholders.

### **Research frameworks in archaeological management plans**

In the absence of research frameworks to guide the identification and assessment of Australian historical archaeological sites, AMPs currently provide the only opportunity to pursue broad scope research agendas. Aside from papers by Ireland (1989), Mackay (1996), Lavelle (1996), the NSW Heritage Office (2000) and Iacono (2002) the advantage of using archaeological management plans to pursue these or more specifically how to achieve this in a broadly acceptable way currently remains under exploited. This does not mean that individual archaeologists have not thought about these issues, as most AMPs produced after 1994 include what they describe as research frameworks, although only the Newcastle AMP (Suters et al.1997) and PHALMS (Godden Mackay Logan 2000) analyse the place of research design in archaeological investigations in any detail.<sup>14</sup>

PHALMS (Godden Mackay Logan 2000) made significant in-roads into the issue of broad-based research agendas by incorporating a regional research framework approach within the structure of an AMP. The framework incorporates accepted National, State and local historic themes and proposed research questions from a range of inter-related disciplines such as palynology to guide significance assessments of Parramatta's archaeological resource.

### **Proposed heritage research and management framework**

The NSW Heritage Office *Review of Archaeology Planning Systems and Practices in NSW* (2000) proposed a 'Heritage and Management Framework' model incorporating both regional and thematic frameworks to provide a more substantial, integrated and accessible system of significance

assessment and management options applicable in planning frameworks at both State and local government levels, to address issues of consistency of approach and research duplication. Based on the Scottish Burgh Survey system, the strategy proposed a single heritage study for each local government area that included separate but integrated 'value studies' such as Aboriginal, natural, landscape and built heritage components. The idea was to provide a more inclusive approach to 'draw together the disparate studies that currently exist in local areas and...ensure that other site types and values not currently the subject of proactive assessment are identified and managed' (NSW Heritage Office 2000:14).

PHALMS (Godden Mackay Logan 2000) and the *Parramatta Aboriginal Heritage Study* (Mary Dallas Consulting Archaeologists 2003) represent the historical and Aboriginal archaeological components of a local Parramatta management strategy based on the model framework. The Heritage Office has postponed undertaking the other elements for the Parramatta pilot strategy (natural, landscape and built heritage), or preparation of thematic and regional research frameworks. However, State government recognition of this need is apparent in the 2000 Review document and the focus of a subsequent workshop initiated by the NSW Heritage Office 'to re-ignite the review of current archaeological practices, archaeological research priorities, the retention of archaeological remains, and public benefits of archaeology' (NSW Heritage Office 2004a:2).

### **University and consultancy archaeology: opportunities for collaboration**

A number of historical archaeologists have explored the relationship between university-based and consultancy archaeology and more specifically, their independent and collaborative contributions to research strategies in Australian historical archaeology (see Murray and Allen 1986; Birmingham 1990; Egloff 1994; Connah 1998, 2003; Mackay and Karskens 1999). Some studies remark on the shift in emphasis over recent decades from university-based research projects to those driven by external forces of legislative compliance and development demands (Frankel 1998:18, 27; Murray 2002; Colley 2002). Lydon (2002, 2005:178, 181) and Paterson and Wilson (2000:86) have identified ensuing changes of approach within both spheres that have led to positive and supportive affiliations, professional collaborations, and the teaching of applied archaeology courses.

Appropriate treatment of the historical archaeological resource is a primary and common aim of both academic and consultancy-based archaeologists, regardless that they may derive different benefits from their achievements. Lydon has pointed out how 'the boundaries between academy and workplace are dissolving as a result of institutional and intellectual change' (2005:173), with students being taught heritage management 'in order that they may become effective custodians' (2002:129). Many Australian universities now encourage a vocational perspective in their archaeology programs, incorporating applied archaeology courses and inviting consultants to teach some of these elements. What is imperative now, as Murray has acknowledged, is to accept that while most historical archaeology is being undertaken in the commercial arena, 'it is absolutely vital that models of practice be adopted that help us all to derive the maximum benefit from such work' (2002:12). Rather than bemoan the situation, enterprising projects are occurring that capitalise on the mutual resources of universities, public and private sector organisations to galvanize that collective knowledge and expertise and apply it to positive effect.

The collaboration of La Trobe University and commercial consultants Austral Archaeology and Godden Mackay Logan in undertaking archaeological investigations on the Casselden Place site in Melbourne's CBD (Godden Mackay Logan et al. 2004) is one example of how the discipline can achieve twofold benefit from the current direction of archaeological practice. Pooling the different skills and resources of university and consultant-based archaeology creates opportunities to further develop site analyses and recording methods, train students in methods of recording and analysis and where possible invite community participation. Colley has also discussed the advantages of these relationships, suggesting that 'university staff and...students are often better equipped to undertake research resulting from [compliance based] projects than are the consultants themselves' (2002:49). Broaching the issue of how to integrate the data amassed from commercial projects into research agendas in England, both Pryor (1995:230) and Lucas (2001:12) imply that the discipline may be waiting for academics to do this. Expanding on Colley's point, these collaborative associations could perhaps provide means to do this. This avenue has been pursued infrequently in the past because of conflicts that can arise between university and development project timeframes. Outcomes of the recent Casselden Place project present an ideal opportunity to study the effectiveness of these exchanges and the potential for future partnerships to produce useful, comprehensive studies.

### **CONCLUSION**

The intention of this paper has been to revitalise and progress the development of focused research frameworks and comparative evaluation sources as critical priorities for Australian historical archaeological resource management. I have sought to confirm why these strategies represent a more positive way of meeting broader stakeholder needs than is achieved in the current keyhole approach to archaeological investigations. Linking research frameworks with AMPs is promoted here as an opportunity to assist in addressing their absence so that an informed comparative evaluation process can identify the sites where the resources of all stakeholders would be most appropriately directed.

I have conveyed some of the challenges that inhibit cost-effective land management and meaningful investigation results in commercial archaeology arguing, as others have before me, that this is achievable in areas where archaeology is a regular planning consideration through the advanced preparation of research frameworks and the re-evaluation of contemporary concepts of research potential.

Without explicit research bases, the practice of Australia historical archaeological resource management will continue as a series of *ad hoc*, disconnected damage limitation exercises where managing the archaeological resource more accurately represents legitimised management of its destruction. Clearly, in trying to improve this approach, balancing archaeological priorities with those of developers, landowners, statutory agencies and interested communities presents genuine challenges that are not unique to Australia. The promotion of mutually beneficial industry collaboration has begun to address this imbalance in progressive and enterprising ways.

As argued here, certain aspects of Australian historical archaeological management administration require review. It is fair to say that there is a general dissatisfaction among senior heritage agency managers across the country regarding the achievements of historical archaeology when considered in terms of financial expenditure. While these claims may not be entirely unfounded, the issues stem in part from the way



that archaeology, and heritage generally, is required to comply with planning processes and development decisions that seek economically rational outcomes (Smith 1996:75, 1994). The site-by-site approach characteristic of compliance-based archaeology does not generally allow for adequate appraisal of the research value, quality of deliverable, or general standard of archaeological research. Ongoing management and review of strategic projects, research methods and archaeological practice present obvious resource challenges, not least that of funding. Yet, the long-term capacity of historical archaeology to contribute to Australian history cannot be realised without employing the necessary focus, funds and management resources into these reforms in the short term.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 This paper is based on research undertaken as part of the author's doctoral dissertation, which focused on archaeology and associated legislation and procedures within Victoria and NSW. That focus is retained in this paper, although the issues under discussion affect the management of historical archaeological in each Australian State and Territory to relatively similar effect.
- 2 In this paper the term 'comparative evaluation sources' indicates information resources such as consolidated site registers, detailed site-type studies and regional surveys that can provide syntheses of past research and archaeological investigations. As the following 'Archaeological Research Frameworks' discussion suggests, these resources can assist in identifying knowledge gaps and research priorities.
- 3 Broad-scale archaeological plans have been used as management tools since the late 1980s in NSW and the early 1990s in Victoria. They have generally followed a basic format combining historical research and physical assessment to identify potential archaeological resources and map their location, functioning primarily as an early warning system for heritage advisors and local government planners, to assist with archaeological issues arising from development proposals (Iacono 2005:18).
- 4 The topic of significance assessment is the subject of a separate paper being prepared by the author which suggests a number of archaeological specific thresholds, values and criteria that may assist the assessment and evaluation processes applied in the Australian historical archaeology context.
- 5 The former NSW Heritage Office defined Research Designs as: 'A set of questions that can be investigated using archaeological evidence and a methodology for addressing them ... intended to ensure that archaeological investigations focus on genuine research needs' (NSW Heritage Office and DUAP 1996a:37).
- 6 Terms such as research frameworks, standing or rolling

research frameworks, thematic frameworks and regional research designs are used somewhat interchangeably in Australia. Their overall intention as perceived here is to convey what English Heritage refers to as 'a general framework of well-synthesised research achievement that will support the development of a new generation of research, but will also provide reference points for cultural resource management' (English Heritage nd). The Heritage Office defines Regional Frameworks as: 'A co-ordinated approach to archaeological research and investigation developed for a large area or precinct incorporating research questions and themes that apply to a number of sites' (NSW Heritage Office and DUAP 1996a:37).

- 7 Like the Scottish Burgh Survey (see Iacono 2005:104), the Irish Urban Archaeological Survey, which was compiled between 1982 and 1995, identifies archaeologically sensitive areas within historic Irish towns and counties to assist local council and planning authorities to appropriately manage the urban archaeological resource and development requirements for those places.
- 8 For example, the former NSW Heritage Office proposed 'Heritage Research and Management Framework', described later in the paper.
- 9 The PHALMS project encouraged input from archaeologists and historians through a one-day workshop. Consultation with historical archaeologists who have worked in Parramatta but did not attend the workshop indicated reticence to provide unpaid intellectual input into a well-funded project. This suggests that any future arrangements to progress discussion of broad-based research framework should not be associated with specific commercial projects. An acceptable way to encourage contributions may be for State heritage agencies to initiate seminars that revive debate about archaeological research priorities as a means to obtain input for a model heritage framework such as that proposed by the NSW Heritage Office in 2000.
- 10 The recommendation section in some Australian AMPs assigns review to the relevant local council and heritage authority, although not all plans raise this issue. It is critical that archaeologists participate in the review of AMP research agenda components to ensure that reappraisal integrates contemporary knowledge and theoretical advances.
- 11 Although many compliance-led investigation reports do not include comprehensive analysis, archaeologists do make attempts, usually self-funded, to research and publish material culture studies based on evidence from these projects. Recent examples include Martin Carney's re-analysis of bottles and tableware from a Parramatta site (1998), Mary Casey's analysis of dairying and pottery in Pymont (1999), Jenny Lindberg's synthesis of common button types from Sydney sites (1999), Denis Gojak and Iain Stuart's clay tobacco pipe study (1999), Mike McPhail (1999) and Roy Lawrie's (1999) syntheses of plant and soil types (respectively) from a range of Sydney sites.
- 12 Although this situation may reflect a concern of some archaeologists employed in development-led archaeology, these strategies would need to be established in the future before its validity could be considered.
- 13 At the time of writing the Heritage Office has been integrated into the NSW Department of Planning. Little change is expected in terms of current procedures and the management of archaeological resources and heritage generally.

14 Siobhan Lavelle appealed for a consensus on research objectives and applicable strategies to secure 'basic information and fundamental goals ... so that we can eventually hope to move on to new ones' (1996:6). Her background paper in the Newcastle AMP identifies and where appropriate addressed the relevance of overseas approaches developed for urban archaeological environments, to assist in determining future research directions for Newcastle's urban archaeology (Suters et al. 1997: Appendix E: Research Design Background Paper).

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