



INTRODUCTION

The installation of renewable energy systems, such as solar panels, on existing buildings are becoming increasingly desirable and may potentially be a necessity with the move towards sustainable living. As places on the State Register of Heritage Places are not exempt from the social change, the demand for the installation of such systems has increased.

This guideline sets out basic principles on how assessment is approached for the impact of the installation of renewable energy systems on the cultural heritage significance of State registered places.

The guideline is aligned to the State's sustainability strategy as set out in "Hope for the Future: the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy", prepared in September 2003.

Aim of the Guideline

To minimise the impact of renewable energy systems on the cultural significance of heritage buildings.

Objectives of the Guideline

To increase awareness of appropriate installation of renewable energy systems, such as solar panels and wind turbines, on heritage buildings, through:

- the identification of the main issues;
- the consideration of the Burra Charter principles; and
- the setting of basic principles.

Identification of Main Issues

The two main issues associated with the installation of renewable energy systems on State registered places are the impact on significant fabric and visual setting.

The installation of such systems may require electrical work, plumbing, and fixings/anchor points on walls or roofs which could potentially have an impact on significant fabric. This impact may be minimised if done in a sympathetic and sensitive manner.

The visual impact of the systems may also be detrimental to the place. Main frontages, significant vistas to and from the place, and form and mass of the place need to be considered to guide the location of the equipment.

Burra Charter Principles

The Burra Charter (the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance) is regarded by the Australian Heritage Council as one of three seminal documents of the heritage conservation profession, namely the Australian Natural Heritage Charter for the Conservation of Places of Natural Heritage Significance and Ask First: A Guide to Protecting Indigenous Places.

The articles set out in the Burra Charter form “first principles” on which assessments of proposed developments to State registered places are made. The installation of renewable energy systems on State registered places would be considered and assessed under similar principles.

Articles from the Burra Charter which are relevant to the installation of renewable energy systems are as follows:

Burra Charter Articles

Article 3.1 – Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.

Article 3.2 – Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.

Article 8 – Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual setting and other relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place. New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.

Article 15.1 – Change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a place should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation.

Article 15.2. – Changes which reduce cultural significance should be reversible, and be reversed when circumstances permit.

Article 22.1 – New work such as additions to the place may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation.

Article 27.1 – The impact of proposed changes on the cultural significance of a place should be analysed with reference to the statement of significance and the policy for managing the place. It may be necessary to modify proposed changes following analysis to better retain cultural significance.

Article 27.2 – Existing fabric, use, associations and meanings should be adequately recorded before any changes are made to the place.

First Principles

The installation of renewable energy systems is to be respectful of the place, with as little intrusion into significant fabric as possible.

The installation of renewable energy systems is to retain the visual setting of the place.

The installation of renewable energy systems is to be readily reversible.

The installation of renewable energy systems must not distort, obscure or detract from the significance of the place.

The installation of renewable energy systems is to be analysed against the Statement of Significance and Conservation Plan (if available) of the place.

If the installation of renewable energy systems requires removal of fabric, recording of the change is required.

Setting Principles

In light of the two main issues and in the context of the Burra Charter, the following basic principles are to be applied when considering the installation of renewable energy systems in State registered places:

1. The significance of the place as stated in the Statement of Significance must not be negatively impacted on by the installation of the system.
2. The conservation policies as set out in the Conservation Plan (if available) must be considered when proposing the type and location of the renewable energy system for the place.
3. The visual setting of the place, particularly of its main frontage and the dominant roof, must be maintained. The system must not detract from the visual presentation of the place to its main street or significant vista.
4. The main roof form or shape must not be negatively impacted on by the system.
5. All necessary electrical and plumbing conduits for the system should not create unnecessary visual clutter.
6. Fixings and anchor points should, as much as possible, utilise existing points or be located so as to minimise damage to significant fabric.
7. The installation of the system must be readily reversible.
8. If the installation of renewable energy systems requires removal of fabric, recording of the change is required.

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