

Monarto's Contested Landscape

PAUL WALKER, JANE GRANT AND DAVID NICHOLS

The proposal to develop a new city at Monarto in South Australia during the 1970s was an important project of the reforming government of Don Dunstan. Dunstan's view was that Monarto would be a city environmentally suited to the tough conditions of its site, and to an 'Australian way of life'. As planning and preliminary design proceeded from 1972 to 1975, the landscape potential of the city's selected site became central to its conception. This paper draws on new research comprising interviews with key participants and archival material to examine four issues: the adoption of an environmental orientation in Australian urban planning and discourse in the 1970s; strategies in the design proposals that seemingly gave Monarto validity even as the demographic and political drivers for it dissolved away; the investigations that supported Monarto's landscape strategies; and attitudes to social and cultural history that the Monarto project adopted. While ultimately the plan for Monarto was abandoned, the projected city's landscape can be seen as a theatre for competing values in relation to natural and cultural heritage and design ambitions. The paper situates Monarto within national and international urban discourse that is more complex than has been previously acknowledged, indicative of competing values and ideologies in the planning, landscape and design discourses of the period.

Calls for a second new South Australian city first emerged after the 1962 *Adelaide Metropolitan Development Plan* warned that services and infrastructure would be unable to keep pace with a projected population surge in Adelaide from 600,000 to close to 1.5 million by 1991. The *Adelaide Metropolitan Development Plan* was delivered to the Liberal state government under Premier Thomas Playford, but only the election of Don Dunstan's Labor government in 1968 saw the political will to plan in earnest for an overspill city of 200,000 (Forster and McCaskill, 2007; Hutchings, 1977). While Monarto's rationale lay in population projections, its radical conceptualisation and innovative landscape strategies were arguably informed by the social and economic failings of its predecessor, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth had been established by the Playford government in 1955 to answer the manufacturing needs of the state, with these narrow employment choices reflecting the government's conservative values. Such heavy dependence on manufacturing also left Elizabeth exposed to the 1973 oil crisis and the economic recession of the mid-1970s. Elizabeth's perceived failings, therefore, were both an ideological lesson and a political opportunity for charismatic Labor leader Don Dunstan. Monarto would be a 'new and beautiful city', Dunstan told a press conference in 1974, and, unlike Elizabeth, it would not be vulnerable to 'one mammoth industry' but rather 'have a variety of manufacturing and commercial,

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academic, scientific and government ventures' (Dunstan speech, 1974; Peter Ward papers). Conceptualised at a time when developing economies were in transition to the post-industrial era, Monarto would be planned presciently around tertiary industries (*Monarto Planning Studies*, 1974, p 8). In this post-industrial and environmentally aware era of the early 1970s, the new city would not only prevent Adelaide from becoming 'a congested, smog-shrouded megalopolis' but would also be a city of 'pleasant parklands and literally millions of trees' (Dunstan speech, 1974; Peter Ward papers). Yet, co-opted into the progressive federal Labor government's ambitious, if poorly plotted, new cities project of the mid-1970s, Monarto was to be suspended, and then abandoned, before the end of the decade.

This paper draws on new research, comprising interviews with key participants and archival material, to track four strands of thought about: urban planning and discourse in Australia in the 1970s along with the environmental orientation it included; the urban and architectural designs that seemingly gave the Monarto proposal validity even as the demographic and political drivers for it dissolved; the investigations supporting the landscape strategies for the entire Monarto site; and the attitudes to social and cultural history apparent in the approaches to heritage that the Monarto project adopted. The legacy of Monarto is primarily in the many investigations, design projects, reports and examinations completed in pursuit of its implementation. In thinking through the stages of conceptualisation and planning, as well as the involvement of various agents, this study situates Monarto within national and international urban discourse that is more complex than has been previously acknowledged.

Planning a city for the Australian landscape

Early in 1973, Dunstan painted a verbal picture of the new city:

[It] will probably be unlike any other city in Australia in its design ... a new vision of the Australian city – one which takes the best of what we have in social planning and family convenience, and gives it a new, refreshed and national place in the sun ... [I]t will accept what perhaps only the early settlers [I] have so far, and that is the vicissitudes of our weather, its widely separated extremes of temperatures, its faults and its delightful advantages ... [I]t will be the first city to understand the beauty and environmental advantage of Australian native flora ... a city in which people will find that a much lower scale of water consumption or work is needed in their parks, streets, courtyards and play areas, because the trees, shrubs, plants and grasses belong to the land they grow in (*Monarto Development Commission Annual Report 1975–1976*, p 5).

The new city's location was nonetheless problematic. Its conception as a satellite city to Adelaide limited its location: the imperative of preserving arable lands and the wine industry near the capital left the Mallee, east of the Mount Lofty Ranges, as the only choice. Advantageously, this area was clearly separated from Adelaide by the ranges, with connection to the transportation corridor between Adelaide and Melbourne and access to water from the Murray River. In 1971, with technical advice from Adelaide's PG Pak-Poy and Associates, the decision to locate the new town in the Monarto district was confirmed. Comprising State Conservation Minister Raymond Broomhill, SA Housing Trust Director Alec Ramsay, head

of the Premier's Department Robert Bakewell and Director of Planning Stuart Hart (chair), the Second City Committee was established to undertake social and environmental research (Briton-Jones, 2007; Ron Danvers, pers com, 2014).

Legislation establishing the Monarto Development Commission (MDC) as an administrative vehicle was passed late in 1973, and gave it the wildly ambitious task of creating the new city by 1980. Idealism, and determination to avoid the autocratic governance of Canberra's National Capital Development Commission, impelled innovative collaboration between the MDC's Environmental, Social, Architectural and Town Planning divisions, commensurate with the stated intention of granting future decision making to Monarto's citizens (*The Social Plan for Monarto*, 1974, p 38). Externally, collaborations would be harder, and the MDC's role was not always acknowledged. Indeed, it was compromised early in the government's separate appointments of consultant Boris Kazanski and the British planning firm Shankland Cox to produce concept plans for Monarto. Their cosmopolitan urban centre images did not integrate with the MDC's – and Dunstan's – nationalist agenda: to develop 'an Australian living style ... to foster cultural awareness in an Australian setting' (ibid, p 41), an Australian ethos aligning with the federal government's agenda. Tensions between the nationalist ambitions of the MDC and the internationalism of the consultants impeded the progress of Monarto; they also register wider contestation of Australian identity, the 'crisis in national meaning' (Curran, 2004) that underscores the era.

Although Pak-Poy approved the Monarto site (documented in its *Monarto Development Study* published by the Australian National Urban and Regional Development Authority in 1973), a Department of Agriculture study questioned its suitability (Chittleborough and Wright, 1974). The clay soil and a fault line meant it would be difficult to build in much of the area selected. Moreover, the climate was extreme even by Australian standards: prone to subzero temperatures in winter and heat waves of over 40 degrees Celsius in summer. Topographically, it alternated between undulating and flat. The site defied the expert advice of commentators such as Amos Rapoport, who considered that distinguishing and varied features such as a shoreline or adjacency to mountains were essential to the location of a new town (Rapoport, 1972). Sharing this view, Shankland Cox partner Charles Bosel notes that the site would not have been selected had his firm been involved from the beginning (Bosel, pers com, 2014).

The most detailed analysis of the implications of Dunstan's view that landscape was central to the conception of Monarto is perhaps contained in the document *Monarto Planning Studies*, produced by the MDC's Town Planning Division late in 1974. It was based 'to a large extent' on the input by the consultants, PG Pak-Poy & Associates and Kazanski & Associates (associated with Shankland Cox Partners of London) (Figure 1).

Countering the criticism of the Monarto site for its blandness, in *Monarto Planning Studies* (1974) the commission sought to demonstrate a subtle complexity:

Many other cities have dramatic, broadscale settings formed by mountain ranges, lakes or the sea, but have, internally, relatively uninteresting landscape. Monarto on the other hand is situated in a subdued regional setting but has within the site,

a wide variety of landscape detail formed by complex and rugged gullies, rolling slopes, stands of native vegetation and rock outcrops (p 9).

This description may overestimate the interest value of the site's topography and vegetation cover. Yet these differentiations informed decisions about the location of the city's major elements. The park system would be based on natural drainage channels, giving it an overall east–west orientation, with a north–south parkland spine established to produce linkages – corridors both for wildlife and human recreation. The confluence of two major creek systems, the Dry and Rocky Gully creeks, coincided with a central area, or the 'heartland', with mature stands of tree cover:

The vegetation in association with the two creeks and complex and varied landforms offer the opportunity to create a central parkland of distinctive beauty which could give Monarto a uniquely Australian image (*Monarto Planning Studies*, 1974, p 24).

This heartland was to be the focus of Monarto's 'landscape concept' and its 'total urban structure', the confluence of natural and built elements creating 'a complex and intense area forming the hub of the city' (ibid, p 26). A new lake would reinforce and complement existing attributes.

Transportation routes within the city were also aligned with the east–west pattern of the site's natural features, complementing the existing major Adelaide–Melbourne road and rail line. The overall road pattern within the metropolitan area was a loose grid threaded with parkland corridors.

Development areas for residential neighbourhoods, the central city, industrial and service areas and institutional uses were allocated in relationship both to the projected parklands and conservation areas and to the transportation grid; employment opportunities would be spread throughout. Areas where sub-soil conditions would make building difficult were to be used for 'broadacre' purposes – particularly reforestation (ibid, pp 26–29).

The environmentalism of the planned strategy for Monarto and the discursive context of its discussion reflected more than the design ethos brought by the consultants. The environmental cause gathered momentum under the Dunstan and Whitlam governments, as legislative and administrative innovations show. Assent was given to the Australian government's Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act on 17 December 1974, which required environmental factors to be considered during assessment (*Draft Plan for Environmental Study*, 1975, p 9). The MDC took pains not merely to conform to the new requirements but also to make its compliance apparent. The expedited timeframe for the city's implementation – the first tranche of the new population was expected by the end of 1978 – compromised these intentions.

City centre

The environmental cause was of course not confined to government agencies or to Australia. The consultants designing the city centre brought international experience with them, and exposure to important lines of environmental inquiry that reinforced their influence on Monarto.

The centre's construction was the initial focus. The rationale for this prioritising had several strands: to give Monarto a strong image; to build for administrative,

Figure 1: Shankland Cox drawings of Monarto's plan. (Image: Studio Kazanski/Shankland Cox, 1975.)



commercial and retail functions to make it a viable entity separate from Adelaide; and to keep it compact but in line with an 'Australian way of life'. To the east of the site designated for the central city and its lake, remnant vegetation immediately offered the bushland amenity of Monarto's conception. An anticipated 1,000 new residents were to be living there by the end of 1978, with 5,000 to 6,000 arriving annually thereafter (*Monarto Planning Studies*, 1974, p 63). Detailed design of the centre was expedited well beyond that of the outlying residential and industrial districts anticipated as part of the long-term plan (*Monarto Development Commission Annual Report 1975-1976*, p 14).

The architects involved in the design of the central city were therefore necessarily involved in the project early in its implementation and had a much wider influence on its design ethos than might otherwise have been the case. Boris Kazanski and his replacement (from early 1975) as the main architectural consultant on Monarto, John Andrews, were both Australian but both brought with them experiences and attitudes from international careers. Kazanski graduated from the University of Adelaide; before Dunstan engaged him in 1972 to work on Monarto and operate as a state urban design consultant, he had worked in Europe. There he formed associations with the Berlin architect Rolf Gutbrod, designer of the West German pavilion at Montreal's Expo 67, and with the Rome studio of Pier Luigi Nervi, highly regarded for innovative and beautiful reinforced concrete structures. Kazanski sought to involve both Gutbrod and Nervi in the Monarto project, and Gutbrod visited the site in early 1974, to give advice based on his experience of building in the arid Middle East. Gutbrod's Mecca Convention Centre, like his Montreal pavilion – both done with the young Frei Otto – featured dramatic tensile roofs. Kazanski's work for the Monarto central city would focus on the 'Monarto Hub', a building also featuring huge, tent-like roofs. A carnivalesque centre for communal activities, the exposition of science and 'fun', it was apparently informed by the aleatory architectural explorations of such international 1960s neo-*avant garde* innovators as Cedric Price and Archigram. The Hub, first appearing in a 1974 report by Kazanski, Shankland Cox and Gutbrod, titled *Concept Plan for Monarto*, was not welcomed by the MDC (Figure 2).

Andrews was slightly older than Kazanski, and brought extensive experience of large, complex projects from his successful career in Canada and Australia. The architectural precedents from which his work developed stretched back to mid-century modernist debates on monumentality and urban form, to which he had been exposed during his Master of Architecture education at Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 1957–1958. This influence is apparent in the project that made Andrews' name as an independent architect, 1965's Scarborough College in Toronto.

Andrews also brought significant connections to two important streams of landscape thinking. At Scarborough, he had worked with the landscape architect Michael Hough, educated at the University of Pennsylvania under Ian McHarg. McHarg's ecological approach was to be a profoundly influential paradigm across the whole international field of landscape architecture – and regional planning – particularly after his *Design with Nature* was published in 1969. Hough was later characterised as one of McHarg's most significant followers (Spirn, 2000, p 113). Whether or not it can be attributed to Hough, Scarborough indicates Andrews had a predisposition to consider building complexes in relation to landscape conditions. Certainly, by the time of Andrews' involvement in Monarto in 1975, an environmental approach pervaded his Australian office: a report from that year on planning for the Palm Beach peninsula, for example, cites *Design with Nature* directly and indirectly.

Scarborough links Andrews to a McHargian line that he in turn brought to Monarto. Cameron Offices, the project that brought Andrews home to Australia in 1969, entails connection to a different landscape tradition. In Toronto, Andrews

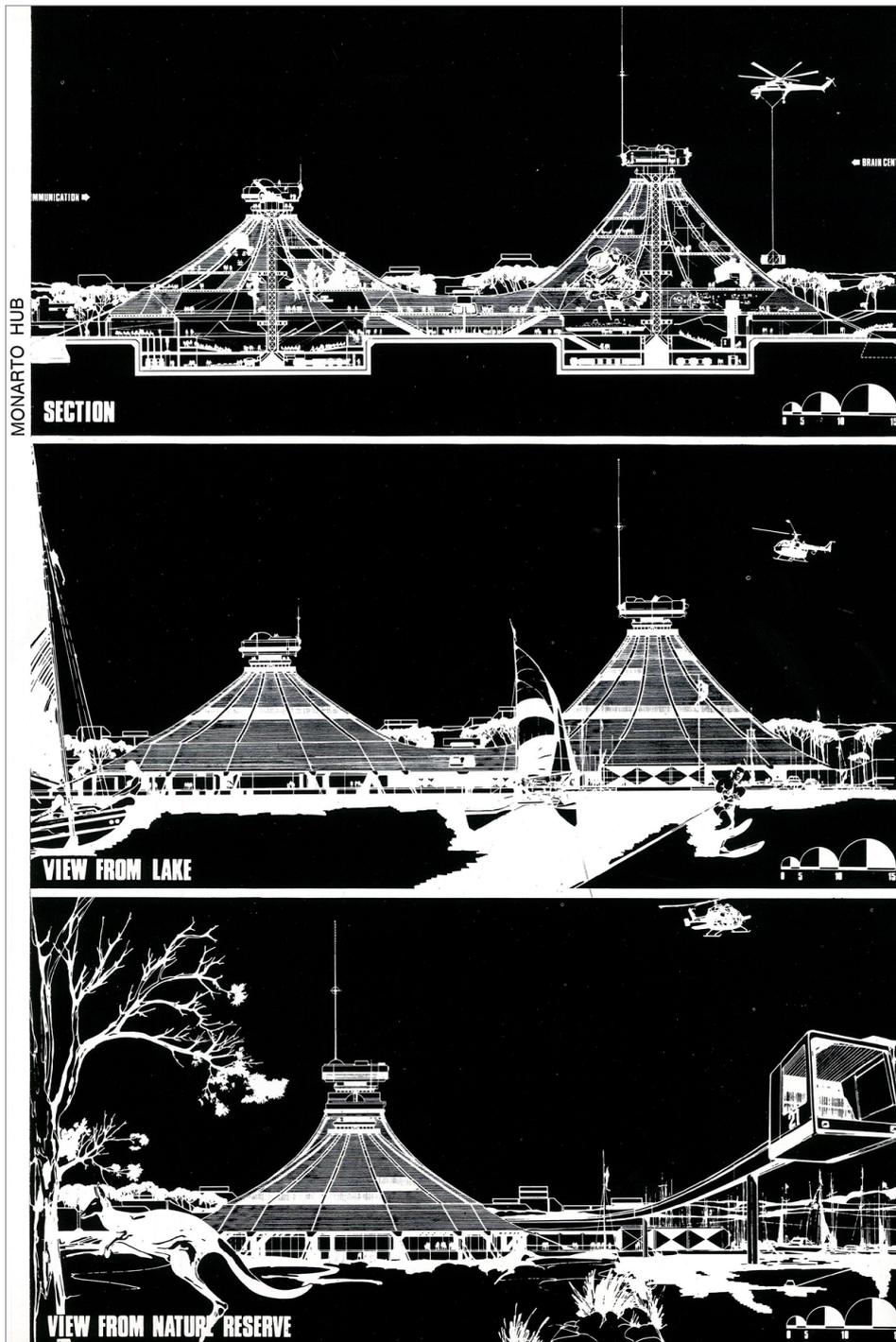


Figure 2: Boris Kazanski's design for the Monarto Hub, drawn by Alan Boutwell, design team member. (Image: Studio Kazanski/Shankland Cox, 1975.)

had made a close friendship with the landscape architect Richard (Dick) Strong when both were working in the architectural office of JB Parkin, a leading Toronto practice that had sought to remake itself as a 'modern' company with work akin to that of Mies van der Rohe. Andrews and Strong were to work separately from the same building in Colborne Street in central Toronto; both were part of an informal collective of professionals called Integ. Strong, like Andrews, had studied at Harvard, but his teacher, leading landscape architect Hideo Sasaki, was more conventional than McHarg and continued to see landscape architecture primarily as a modernist, aesthetic enterprise. (On Sasaki as a teacher, see Necker and Tunnard, 1993; and as a landscape architect, see Walker, 1993.) Strong

worked in Sasaki's Boston area office (Simo, 2001) and, later, Strong's own firm in Toronto had a partnership with Sasaki for some time. Strong followed Andrews to Australia to work on the Cameron Offices project, designing landscapes for the long courtyards between the complex's seven fingers, themed to represent different Australian landscapes. Period photographs of these gardens suggest Sasaki's formalism remained entrenched in Strong's approach.

Additionally, Andrews' personal charisma and the fame he enjoyed in the mid-1970s gave his views particular bearing. Andrews' rather schematic work for central Monarto (Figure 3) shows evidence of both the formalism of Strong's landscape approach and McHarg's environmentalism, the growing paradigm of the period. The first can be seen in the diagonal axis that bisects the plan, and in the cascade of pools – each square in the plan – around which Andrews configured the main central city buildings. The second can be found in the environmentalism that marks the broader Andrews approach, stated right at the beginning of his first report for the MDC, *Potentials for Monarto: First Impressions* (1975), co-written with Philip Cox. The authors wrote that Monarto 'presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate prototypical environmental planning and design ... The problems are typical ... but containing various ecological systems whose conservation would be an asset to any city'.

Planting the city

During 1975, as planning proceeded, research into environmental conditions of the site accelerated. A *Draft Plan for Environmental Study* issued in January 1975 lists 12 areas in which 'base-line' studies of existing conditions at Monarto either were already being undertaken by independent consultants or experts from the South Australian Museum, universities and other research organisations or were about to be commissioned. These 12 areas (none complete) were: aquatic environment, botany, climatology, ecology, geology, geomorphology, historic

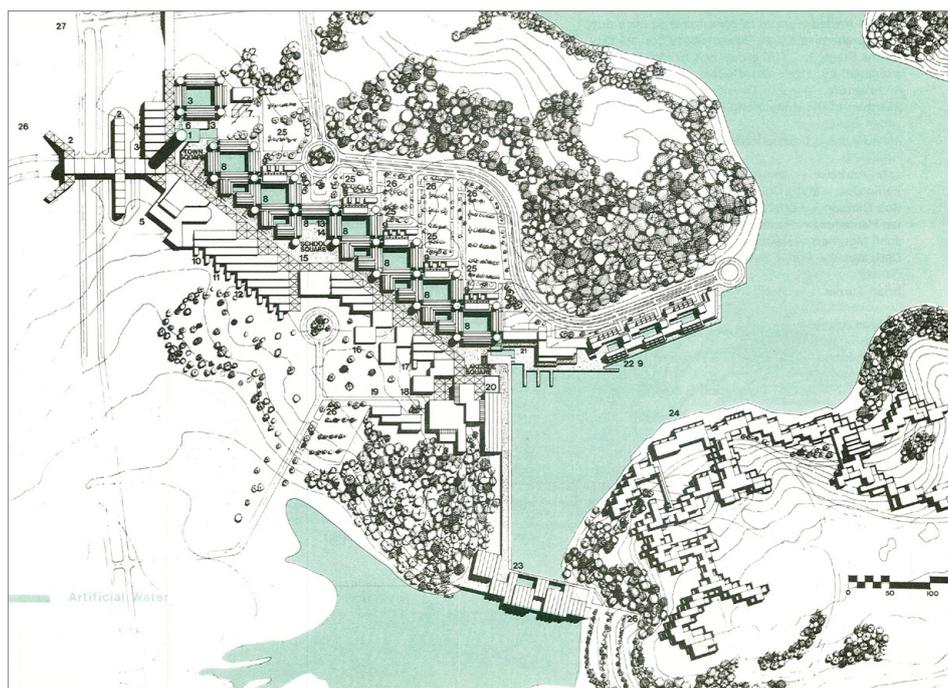


Figure 3: John Andrews' design for the Monarto central city area. (Image: Monarto City Centre Stage One Design Proposal, 1975.)

and archaeological studies, hydrology, pedology, 'regional profile study', wind studies and zoology. Yet specific proposals for the city's physical development had already been made, themselves requiring environmental assessment under the new legislation. Notable among these proposals were Kazanski's central plans and a lake. The plan for 'broadacre treeplanting' also required environmental assessment. The *Draft Plan for Environmental Study* (1975) notes that:

Plans for the Monarto site envisage eventual planting of up to 50% of the area with trees or shrubs. The tree planting program is therefore, on an area basis, the largest single land use change. The reconversion of the Monarto area to woodland will have a profound effect on the soils, water budget, microclimate and wildlife of the area (p 58).

As with the city centre, while neither baseline surveys of conditions nor environmental impact assessments of the afforestation of thousands of hectares were complete at the beginning of 1975, tree planting on a large scale had already begun. In 1974, 340 hectares had been planted (*ibid*, p 58), when the only specific technical advice at hand had come from the South Australian Ornithological Association. The Association noted that plant species selected for Monarto needed to suit conditions; while alluding to the suitability of a wide range of Australian species, it recommended 'limiting the selection basically to species indigenous to the Monarto district and surrounding areas' (*Birds of the Monarto Area*, 1974, Appendix B, p 2).

Commitment to extensive planting at Monarto was long-standing. Planting native trees in a district that had undergone land clearance for generations was a major preoccupation of the Second City Committee. Landscape architect Ron Danvers recalls Alec Ramsay's scepticism regarding the new town's future and how he kept 'insisting unrelentingly in meetings I attended on a program to plant most of the site with native trees' (Danvers, pers com, 2014). Revegetation would be partial compensation for the money otherwise wasted on the project.

Like Kazanski and Andrews, Danvers had significant international links: he had recently returned to Adelaide from working with the Italian *avant garde*, anti-city architectural firm Superstudio, most famous for its graphic, 'The Continuous City', an endless built grid encircling the globe, to be wandered by high-tech nomads (Treadwell, 2010). His close connection with Superstudio was important to Danvers: the firm he formed with John Dallwitz was named Super Environment Design and Research Studio and cited its 'Association with Superstudio, Firenze' on its letterhead. While Monarto's landscape planning shows no overt influence of Superstudio, the millions of trees Danvers planted, standing in the place where a fantastical city centre of floating concrete tents was imagined, bring Superstudio and its anti-city imagery to mind.

Answering the question of which plant species should be planted in Monarto exercised a great deal of reflection and expertise. Commentary in *Monarto Planning Studies* (December 1974) shows that the extant natural vegetation of the site was already understood: dominant species were woodland eucalypts on the lower slopes of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the west and mallee eucalypts over much of the rest. That report emphasised the value of every remaining tree: 'every clump of trees or even single tree on the site is important' (*ibid*, p 52). It also

acknowledged the significance of non-indigenous species in Monarto's extant vegetation (ibid, p 18).

In 1975, studies of the area's botany and ecology – which the MDC had sought from the Waite Institute, the South Australian State Herbarium, the South Australian Museum and, in particular, HG Andrewartha (Emeritus Professor of Zoology at the University of Adelaide) – became available. Andrewartha demonstrated that six major indigenous plant communities of the Monarto region were now present only as remnants.

Nevertheless, Australian species not indigenous to the Monarto area were evaluated and widely planted. The *Monarto Development Commission Annual Report 1975–1976* notes that:

The Commission, in association with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, is developing an irrigation experimental station at the Monarto site to investigate the effects of garden watering on the local soils and to determine a range of trees, shrubs and ground covers suitable for the soils and climate of Monarto (p 8).

Forty-six species of exotic and native shrubs and groundcovers (the natives selected from across Australia) were subjected to differing degrees of irrigation over 10 years (Meissner and Lay, 1985), continuing well beyond the demise of the urban plan for Monarto. Vestiges of this initial regeneration programme still thrive in what is now designated the Monarto National Park. As Ramsay foresaw, tree planting produced Monarto's most enduring physical legacy.

But it was not just environmental issues that guided plant choice. Aesthetic considerations were also significant. The *Monarto Development Commission Annual Report 1975–1976* comments that local species, such as *Callitris preissii* and *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, would dominate parkland plantings and thus produce a common visual quality across the city (the green foliage of the callitris contrasting with the white of the eucalyptus trunks) (p 26). Other species would be selected partly because they thrived either 'naturally' at Monarto or in other low-rainfall areas of South Australia, and partly on the basis of horticultural qualities of 'colour, shape and other visible attractions' (ibid).

A report produced by the Landscape Architects Section (which apparently consisted of one person, landscape architect GS Sanderson) of the MDC's Town Planning Division in April 1976 promotes the 'city in the bush' mentality pervading much of the official discourse on Monarto. Yet it also notes facilities such as sports grounds would need irrigation beyond that required for passive recreational areas, and that in 'private open space' – presumably private gardens – '[t]he vivid colour of subtropical plants, the cool shade of grape vines and plane trees, and the grace and character of Eucalypts will be part of the Monarto urban landscape' (*Landscape Approach to Monarto*, 1976, p 11). Sanderson's report finds value in the existing farm landscape too. While citing the negative impacts of farming – deterioration in indigenous plant communities, creek beds and so on – nevertheless he notes that 'farming has left many interesting stone buildings, dry stone fences and pleasant country roads, and has avoided non-arable land distinguished by its accompanying bush. Farming made a mixed contribution to the elements which form the essence of Monarto's landscape' (ibid, p 3).

Remembering the past and forgetting

Sanderson's *Landscape Approach to Monarto* (1976) report seems to have been the only item in the vast documentation of Monarto's conception and early implementation that acknowledges significance in the agricultural landscapes to be replaced. The survey activities undertaken in 1974 and 1975 did, however, address the site's history of human occupancy, primarily through documentation of artefacts and specific locations rather than of the broader modifications brought about by human habitation. Monarto was named after a late-nineteenth-century tribal woman, a reminder of indigenous heritage, which the Department of Environment and Conservation, under Broomhill, was already documenting. The department commissioned Betty F Ross to write on the occupation and dispossession of the Ngarlta people of the Ngarrindjeri nation of the lower regions of the Murray. Ross's short, non-scholarly *Aboriginal History of the Monarto Area* (1974) is distinguished by its romantic representation of the indigenous people and their 'harmonious relationship with the land'. More significantly, it documents the neglect and vandalism of known Aboriginal sites, and includes a photograph of rock art erased by semi-literate teenage declarations of love. Ross co-authored a more professional report for the MDC with Bob Ellis of the South Australian Museum, *Aboriginal Relics in the Lower Mount Lofty Ranges, Murray River, and Monarto Area* (May 1974). This was one of several reports commissioned from experts at the South Australian Museum and the Australian Museum in Sydney on 'aboriginal sites' (painting sites, canoe and shield trees, middens and so on) from the Murray to the Mount Lofty Ranges. These reports were important precedents for the Historical Guidelines produced six years later by the Department of Environment and Planning (as it had been renamed), which would more insightfully note the subtle changes to the landscape that indigenous people effected through their burning practices.

No report treated the heritage of the farming families that subsequently occupied Monarto with similar thoroughness. This was a farming heritage forged by nineteenth-century German immigrants who brought with them building styles and cultural practices (Young, 1985). While physical evidence of this migration survived in buildings such as the Lutheran Church, the cultural heritage had been partially suppressed through anti-German sentiment in the early twentieth century, when institutions such as the Monarto German school were closed. The MDC itself produced a report titled *Monarto Old Buildings* (1974) (Figure 4), with photographs of 11 buildings that were among those to be conserved: churches, the modest existing municipal offices, farm houses and sheds. Schubert farm was '[a]pproved as the preferred site for a future folk museum and recreation area' (p 4). Items collected for this purpose – generally agricultural implements and sundry household objects (a butter churn, a mantle clock and so on) – had been donated by descendants of the German settlers, and it was anticipated that more would be forthcoming as those descendants left their properties (*Monarto Artefacts Report and Recommendations*, 1974). The exact status of each object and its restoration and conservation requirements were assessed by Dallwitz and Danvers through their Super Environment Design and Research Studio.

Although by the mid-1970s folk museums were well established across regional and rural Australia, typically, collections were collated by amateur local



Figure 4: Front cover of the Monarto Old Buildings report. (Monarto Development Commission, December 1974.)

historical societies (McLennan, 2006). Dallwitz and Danvers, by contrast, were drawing on international developments in museum studies to professionalise what had hitherto been amateur and ad hoc: as they boldly announced to the MDC, their report expressed ‘the current state of the art’ (introductory letter, *Report on Restoration*, 1974). The report deals only with white settlers, but other contemporaneous work by Dallwitz on the Heritage Guidelines exhibits an equally sensitive awareness of the relationship between cultural practice and Aboriginal identity. Heritage, then, was one of several disciplines for which Monarto would act as a proving ground, informing the South Australian Heritage Act that was to be passed in 1978.

Whether intentional or not, the poignant descriptions in Super Environment Design and Research Studio’s report on the objects collected from Monarto’s farms, and in the MDC’s own report on Monarto artefacts, underscored the impoverished material lives of the Monarto farmers (Figure 5). A television documentary, made by the MDC at the time, on the plight of dispossessed families – while rather elegiac in tone – suggested that the ways of life of the existing Monarto population were deeply rooted in the past (*Monarto*, 1975). The evidence of the site’s history collected and commissioned by the MDC seemingly underwrote the inevitability of change and the desirability of a completely new start. The past was to be seen through a lens of nostalgia that, while lending it a sepia glow, made it distant and individual. It also disavowed the contradiction of valuing traces of the farming communities that had lived there while anticipating massive interventions to erase their greatest achievement, their farm landscapes.

Conclusion

It was not long after Monarto’s demise that a narrative emerged in Australian urban planning discourse in which the Monarto project figured as either mere profligacy or a failed but cynical attempt to politically manipulate the South Australian electorate to the benefit of the Labor Party. Or both. Certainly, the

tangible legacy that Monarto left to the South Australian community was mixed: a farming community dispossessed to no end but also a revegetation programme that achieved significant environmental improvements.

Other less tangible legacies remain, however. South Australia's next new town proposal – the Multi-Function Polis project of the 1990s – was driven by a new wave of technological fantasy coupled with neoliberal economics that had learnt nothing from experiments of a generation earlier. It, too, failed. Other impacts are evident at a less grandiose scale. The prospect of realising Monarto diminished from the middle of 1975. Even before the dismissal of Whitlam's government in November 1975, the country's economic woes were sapping the political will to fund Monarto, although it was not until the Liberal Party again won power in South Australia in 1979 that the project was officially abandoned. Nevertheless, the project influenced planning practice in the state throughout the late 1970s as staff at the MDC worked on smaller-scale and more immediate urban planning projects for other locations. The commission's director of architecture, Hank Den-Ouden, was to go on to write guidelines for the state government on streetscape design, residential design and urban tree planting, promoting good practice at the grassroots level aimed at influencing townscape in such growth areas in South Australia as the mining town of Roxby Downs.

Individual careers also developed through Monarto. Another paper examines the place of Andrews' Monarto work in the development of his architecture (Nichols et al, 2014). Kazanski and Shankland Cox's Monarto team members each went on to undertake further work in arid locations – central Australia and Saudi Arabia – passing on the knowledge Gutbrod had brought to Monarto. Kazanski's grand ambitions for the Hub were never to be realised either at Monarto or elsewhere. However, the environmental values – perhaps poorly grasped but nevertheless genuinely sought – that drove the Shankland Cox plan within which Kazanski's urban centre was elaborated were real and stayed with figures involved with the Monarto project long after the plug was pulled.

The projects and plans for Monarto index the multiple strands of urban and landscape thinking extant in professional circles in the 1970s and their encounter with the ecological and environmental concerns whose urgency was just becoming apparent. *Monarto Planning Studies* (1974) implied a systematised, logical form in Monarto's design following from the 'demands of the site and the interactions of urban functions at metropolitan scale' (p 29). However, the diversity of approaches among consultants and organisations working or advising on Monarto led to moments of ideological confusion and contradiction. This complexity in the conceptual development and first steps in implementation at Monarto can be construed as an index of competing values and ideologies in the planning, landscape and design discourses of the period, both in Australia and internationally. In particular, Monarto's landscape became a theatre for competing values in relation to natural and cultural heritage and design ambitions.

The history of Australia's new cities in the 1970s and their flawed implementation is often depicted by historians and participants as entailing too much, too soon, with ambitions thwarted by economic reality. Even direct participants in Monarto's planning and execution claim with hindsight to have



Figure 5: Cover image from Dallwitz and Danvers' Report on Restoration. (Super Environment Design and Research Studio, November 1974.)

regarded the city as, in large part, an ‘exercise’. Forty years later, it seems difficult to believe such cynicism could have produced the extensive documentation and discussion especially apparent in the investigation of Monarto’s landscape conditions and opportunities.

The legacy of Monarto is a rich body of reportage, research and activity. Little remains on the ground to signify the Monarto project. Kazanski recalls that an offhand comment made in the aftermath of the project – that the land acquired should become a zoo – was, to his surprise, made a partial reality. Most of the land was ‘just put up for open sale’ (Frances Gibson, pers com, 2014) and, while an ardent group at Murray Bridge continues to agitate for the concerted development of the area, it is the thousands of trees planted in the region that bear witness to the extraordinary Monarto enterprise.

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