

A toolkit for researching and assessing Chinese Australian heritage places

What are Chinese Australian heritage places?

Australia has many places connected with the history of Chinese settlement, and with Chinese Australian communities.

These places may be sites, archaeological remains, buildings, structures or gardens. Some are grand, others are modest. They can range from large temples and department stores through to small cemeteries or outdoor stone ovens. They can be old or recent and include important objects.

Each of these places has a story to tell about the experiences of Chinese Australians and their part in the emergence of a multicultural nation.

Although some Chinese Australian heritage places are already well-known and protected, many are not. Many sites may be known but have little recorded about them. Others have not yet been identified. Overall, much more needs to be known about Chinese Australian sites.

Finding out what remains of our heritage is a first important step. Our next step will be to keep it and care for it for the benefit of the generations ahead.

Welcome to the toolkit

This toolkit is designed to assist those involved in researching and assessing Chinese Australian heritage places. It was developed particularly for professionals working in the heritage field. The toolkit has six components including links to supporting databases. These components are:

Chinese Australian Heritage Places Research Resources

1. **A brief overview of Chinese life and heritage places in Australia** — examines Chinese settlement in Australia and associated heritage places.
2. The online **Chinese Australian Heritage Bibliography** — a database which lists published and unpublished works dealing with Chinese Australian history and heritage places.
3. **Useful links to other online research tools** — web resources for Chinese Australian heritage research.

Sources for Chinese Australian Heritage Places Research

4. **A practitioner's guide to researching, assessing and recording Chinese Australian heritage places** which contains steps and checklists to help analyse and describe places, and how to apply the heritage criteria used in government planning and listing processes.
5. The online **Chinese Australian Sites Database** which contains preliminary information on a range of Chinese Australian places.
6. A **list of useful contacts and additional information** relating to Chinese Australian heritage.

It is hoped that the *Toolkit* will prove useful to heritage practitioners such as historians and archaeologists, heritage agency staff, local government planners and heritage advisers, academics and students, as well as community groups and individuals investigating local Chinese Australian heritage and places.

Feedback on the toolkit components is welcome. Comments and suggestions should be emailed to ahc@ea.gov.au or mailed to:

Chinese Australian Heritage Project
Australian Heritage Commission
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

COMPONENT 2

Chinese Australian Heritage bibliography

The **Chinese Australian Heritage Bibliography** has been developed as a tool to assist researchers interested in the activities of the Chinese in Australia. It generally lists only those sources that have the activities of the Chinese in Australia as their principal subject matter. It also includes a few sources from foreign countries that make comparative references to Australia.

The bibliography is based on a database originally intended as a research tool to assist in the archaeological study of places occupied by Chinese people in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bell, Grimwade & Ritchie, 1993). It concentrates on sources that are likely to help the study of material culture and the physical manifestations of settlement. This database, funded through the National Estate Grants Program, was developed by a team coordinated by Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, for the Museum of Chinese Australian History in Melbourne.

This bibliography lists sources identified in the bibliographies of existing publications and reports, library catalogues and research databases. An effort has been made to inspect every source cited and verify information, but a few entries have simply been repeated from the work of others in good faith. The bibliography is lightly annotated, principally to clarify entries whose subject matter and usefulness might not be evident from the title and imprint.

The database will provide a useful reference tool to assist members of communities and groups, local history societies and museums, heritage agencies and other government departments, school students, researchers and heritage professionals. It is a tool to which researchers can contribute, by updating and expanding its contents. Information that could be included in the bibliography can be emailed to: ahc@ea.gov.au.

Australian libraries

Libraries throughout Australia have extensive holdings of published works on the Chinese in Australia, although unpublished works are usually only held in one place. Most major Australian library catalogues can be searched on the Internet via the Australian Libraries Gateway at www.nla.gov.au/libraries/. The two largest collections of historical material relating to the Chinese in Australia are held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney and the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

COMPONENT 4

A practitioner's guide to researching, assessing and recording Chinese Australian heritage places

Chinese Australian heritage places can be found by:

- studying historical records
- investigating the places themselves, and
- drawing on the knowledge and memory of individuals and groups in the community.

The whole community, including any Chinese Australian community or group within it, can help to identify Chinese Australian places, and should be encouraged to become involved. A step-by-step guide to organising community involvement is set out in the guide *Migrant Heritage Places in Australia — How to find your heritage places*, published by the Australian Heritage Commission and available online at www.heritage.gov.au/protecting.

Some categories of Chinese Australian heritage places can only be identified by, or with the direct involvement of, the Chinese Australian community. Places associated with and valued by the present generation of Chinese Australians for their contemporary associations are places which have current social significance. These associations may only be known within the community and are critical to identifying and conserving the 'living' Chinese Australian heritage.

The following information outlines the steps needed to adequately research, assess and record Chinese Australian heritage places.

Nine steps for researching, assessing and recording Chinese Australian heritage places

Background research

Step 1: Gather historical information and document community connections with the place

Step 2: Understand the history of the place

STEP 1 — Gather historical information and document community connections with the place

The broader context

A definitive history of the Chinese in Australia does not yet exist and much remains to be learnt about the places related to this history.

To become familiar with the range of Chinese activities and occupations in Australia, study *A brief overview of Chinese life and heritage places in Australia*. This looks at Chinese life in Australia and gives examples of places that illustrate aspects of Chinese Australian heritage.

It may also be helpful to look at this toolkit's **selection of key books and articles**. The more extensive **Chinese Australian Heritage Bibliography** lists a wide range of sources on Chinese Australian history and heritage places.

A local focus

After looking at this broader context, try next to understand the history of Chinese settlement in your local area, using locally available sources of information.

A wide range of historical resources can cast light on the Chinese Australian history of an area (see **Where to find local information** below). Individuals and community groups, especially Chinese community groups, may be able to fill in the local picture and contribute greatly to our knowledge and appreciation of Chinese Australian heritage places.

Actions

- **Contact and involve** Chinese Australian families and communities associated with the place, especially if the project is being undertaken by a non-Chinese Australian group or individual.
- **Search further afield** if local Chinese Australian families have moved away from the area. Try to identify and contact them because their knowledge and links with the area might add to its social significance.
- **Involve the broader community** by locating local historians, knowledgeable residents or members of long-established local families — local historical societies or family history groups may provide you with contacts. Interested groups or individuals should be invited to be involved in the project, contribute their knowledge, and acknowledged in the final documentation.
- **Form an outline of the history** of the Chinese at the place and its surrounding area by studying relevant local histories, published books and articles, government records, maps and photos. Try to find the original descriptions, rather than rely on later and often inaccurate secondary histories. For more ideas on **Where to find local information**, see below. Use the bibliography in this guide, and in the internet resource — *A toolkit for researching and assessing Chinese Australian heritage places* (www.ahc.gov.au/chineseheritage).
- **Take photocopies of the significant records** you discover including historical photographs and plans. Note or photocopy relevant sections of historical text.
- **Interview former residents**, community members and local historians who may know the place and its stories. For places significant to relatively recent Chinese migrants, this might be the only source of information which is available.
- **Consider holding a meeting**, a focus group or a community workshop which may assist in exploring shared memories. Guides have been published that relate directly to the processes of involving local communities. These are the Australian Heritage Commission's *Migrant Heritage Places in Australia — How to find your heritage places — A guide* (2000), and *Protecting local heritage places: a guide for communities* (2000).
- **Check to see if the place is already recorded** by searching the Australian Heritage Places Inventory (www.heritage.gov.au), the *Chinese Australian National Site Database* (www.ahc.gov.au/chineseheritage) and your local council heritage register. The records for many listed places do require further information. You may find places in registers with only some of their values recognised and with Chinese Australian heritage significance omitted. If you have more information, it would be useful to update the listing by contacting the agency administering the register.

Where to find local information

- **Local and regional histories** in the local library, historical society, family history society and state library — several of these have their catalogues on the internet.
- **General historical books and articles** on Chinese Australian history — see **Resources** section at the end of this guide for a feel for the broader context. A wider selection of sources can be found online in the bibliography of *A toolkit for researching and assessing Chinese Australian heritage places* (www.ahc.gov.au/chineseheritage).
- **Oral history recordings** with local Chinese Australians can offer valuable insights into a local area. Some interviews may already exist so first check your local library and historical societies. You may also want to explore the National Library of Australia's national directory of Australia's oral history collections available online via www.nla.gov.au. Some useful guides exist to help you undertake oral history recordings including *Oral History Handbook* by Beth Robertson, (1994).

- **Historical photographs** may be stored at the local library, historical society or at the local newspaper. Photographs of street scenes, celebrations, parades, and work life in a town or suburb or in the country can reveal images of Chinese people and businesses. They can provide evidence of the local Chinese presence and activities and give leads for further research.
- **Local and city newspapers** can be a key source of information but can take time to research. Microfiche or back copies of local newspapers are sometimes held by the local library, family history society or historical society. If not, a useful listing of surviving newspapers in Australian libraries is the National Library of Australia's *Newspapers in Australian Libraries, a Union List, Part 2, Australian Newspapers* (4th edition Canberra 1985), which can be found in many regional and all state libraries.

A number of **Chinese newspapers** have been established in Australia, and these can be a key resource for Chinese language readers. Work has already started on developing an index of one of the most important Chinese language newspapers in Australia, the *Tung Wah* (see <http://chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/>).

- **Local government** records can provide information on property ownership and structural alterations through archived documents such as land titles, maps and plans. These records can also shed light on changes and subdivisions to the place over time.
- **Commonwealth and state government records** are held by state and national archives and can provide very specific information. They are particularly valuable if you have the name of a Chinese person known to have lived locally. The records include naturalisation papers, customs records relating to immigration restriction and the issue of passports as well as census statistics. A database guide and index books to the Chinese naturalisation records in NSW from 1857 to 1887 by T McCormack (1997) is available on CD-ROM at the State Library of NSW and the National Library of Australia.

A valuable resource for Victoria is the reprinted Victorian Parliamentary Papers and legislation relating to the Chinese, 1855-1900, including descriptive reports of Victoria's Chinese population printed in 1868 and 1881, edited by IF McLaren (1985).

- **Mining records** are a major source of information about Chinese mining activities although they may have to be supplemented by other sources, such as newspapers. The *Mining Heritage Places Assessment Manual* by Michael Pearson and Barry McGowan (2000) provides a guide to researching and assessing mining sites.

STEP 2 — Understand the of the place

The reason for gathering historical information is to better understand the place. This stage may take some time, but it is worth doing well as it is crucial to being able to properly assess its heritage value. Once you have gathered this material you will need to sort and analyse it so that a succinct and focused description of the history of the place can be written.

Actions

- **Find answers** to these basic questions:
 - when was the place established or built?
 - how did the Chinese use the place?
 - was the place used before or after its occupation by Chinese people, and if so, what can you find out about them?
 - what major changes, if any, have been made and by whom? What were those changes?
- **More detail is now needed** so use the **Questions to help historical analysis** at right to fill out the information you have gathered. Answer as many of the questions as you can with the information you have. Your particular place may raise other questions in your mind and you may need to seek additional sources of information.

Questions to help historical analysis

Analysing the collected information will be more useful if something is known about Chinese history and about the home provinces of Chinese migrants. The experiences of Chinese Australians varied according to where they came from, where they landed in Australia and their circumstances at the time. Their stories are influenced by their regional affiliations, ancestral origins and obligations, life experience in China prior to migration, personal skills and the varied regional characteristics (economic, climatic and cultural) of their new home in Australia. (See **Overseas Chinese history — general references** in the Resources section of this guide.)

Ask these questions:

1. What was happening regionally?

- What was the extent of Chinese Australian settlement in the region — was this place one of many or was it unusual?
- Are other Chinese Australian places associated with the one being recorded — are they a part of the history of the place?
- What were the connections between the local Chinese Australian community and the broader Chinese community elsewhere in Australia or in the Pacific, South-East Asia or China?
- Did the Chinese Australian place influence, or was it influenced by, broader settlement patterns?
- Did the Chinese Australian presence stimulate or facilitate other industries or activities such as mining, market gardening, pastoralism etc?
- Did the Chinese Australian presence at this place influence transport routes or modes of transport in the district or on a wider scale?
- Did Chinese Australian settlement and related activities have a lasting impact on surrounding landscapes?

2. What does the historical evidence tell us about the use of the place?

- What activity or activities were carried out at the place?
- Do documents exist which relate to the activities at the place such as mining records, store records, family reminiscences?
- Does the evidence, documentary or physical, tell us about activities that were particularly Chinese in origin?
- Was the place part of a broader pattern of Chinese Australian activity and settlement in the area or region?
- Do photographs exist of the place and show how it was used by Chinese Australians?
- Is there evidence of how the place was used and changes made when no longer used by Chinese Australians?
- If the place is a work site, such as a mine, garden or workshop, where did the Chinese Australians workers live?
- Do people survive (Chinese Australian or other) who knew the place when it was used or occupied by Chinese Australians? Have they been interviewed?
- Did the place have any architectural, engineering or aesthetic feature of outstanding creativity or noteworthiness?
- Does historical information about similar Chinese Australian places indicate that this place was in any way unusual, or is it/was it typical of its type?

3. What are the historical associations of the place?

- Was the place associated with prominent identified individuals or groups? How?
- Did any important events occur at the place?
- Does the place have important historical associations not relating to Chinese Australian activities or settlement?
- Did the place influence contemporary or later historical developments? (eg, was it the subject of important legal proceedings; did it have a major role in stimulating local economic development; did it play a role in local social activities or reinforce social cohesion; did it influence Chinese Australian settlement or activities elsewhere; were any important race relations issues raised or resolved there?)
- How important was the Chinese Australian place in the overall context of the Chinese Australian settlement of the region, state or nation. For example, was it the largest Chinese Australian settlement of its type in the region or state; did it lay the foundation for a network of Chinese Australian activities and settlement in the region or state?
- Do communities or groups survive (Chinese Australian or other) who value the Chinese Australian place because of past or current associations?
- What are the relationships between the Chinese and non-Chinese associated with the place (eg marriages, business partnerships, landlord/tenant etc)?
- How do you rank the historical significance of the place:
 - is it important in the history of the state?
 - is it more relevant to the settlement of the local area or region?
 - are the events associated with the place unusual, or did similar things happen elsewhere?
 - were the individuals associated with the place particularly notable?

The discussion in **Step 7** about assessing significance will help in this ranking.

Site investigation

Step 3: Get permission

Step 4: Be prepared

Step 5: Describe the place

Step 6: Photograph the place

STEP 3 — Get permission

Actions

- Before starting to record the place or visiting the site you should **obtain permission** from the property's owner.
- **If access is denied**, decide if you want to proceed with assessing the place, and if so, limit your description to what is observable without entering the property.

STEP 4 — Be prepared

Action

- When visiting the site, **take with you the information and equipment you will need** to record the type of place. For a building, this might be a notebook, pencil, camera and copies of relevant photographs or plans. For a garden or mining site you might also take a clipboard and A4 paper (to sketch a plan), a compass, tape measure and a map.

STEP 5 — Describe the place

Actions

- **Decide on where the boundaries lie.** The place may be very different from that defined by the surveyed property boundaries. Make sure you take into account the functions and relationship of the place and its parts with its setting — for example the boundaries of a mining site may stretch beyond the diggings to incorporate the water races and their source dams. The exact boundary may evolve through the process of exploring the history and values of the place.
- **Record its street address**, if it has one. If it doesn't, note its map grid reference and map name and number. If the area is large, draw the boundary on a copy of the topographic map or street directory map.
- **Draw a map or plan of the place.** If it is a building, also sketch the sheds, driveways, fences and any other features within the boundary of the place as well as the layout of each floor of the building. If it is a larger area of land, sketch the features that make up the place, such as mining remains, creeks, water races, gardens, sheds, machinery and artefacts, taking measurements and/or compass angles from an identifiable fixed point.
- **Compare the place with any existing historical photos** and describe differences and changes that you observe. This will help you to understand the history and changes to the place over time.
- **Describe in your notebook the main features of the place**, such as the style, materials and construction of buildings, their surroundings and settings, mine workings, and gardens etc. Describe in detail any features associated with its Chinese history or which otherwise contribute to its heritage significance. Copy any Chinese inscriptions for later translation. Remember to record features relating to earlier or later use of the place by non-Chinese occupants.
- **Look for the small things as well as the large.** Objects and artefacts on the ground or in a building can provide valuable information, may be part of the place's significance and could add immeasurably to the richness of its story.
- **Take note of related places**, such as buildings which lie outside the boundary.
- **Cross reference your descriptions** with maps, plans or photographs by numbering the descriptions and the mapped/photographed features.
- **Note the condition and intactness of the place.** Has it changed much when compared with old photographs? Have parts been added or demolished? What is its condition? Is its current use causing any damage to the site?
- **Keep notes of oral recollections** of those associated with the place as the human memory can be a rich source of information. These will help to gain insights into places with a recent past that is important to our heritage.

STEP 6 — Photograph the place

Good current photos are invaluable. They will assist your memory later on and will serve as a record of the place in any report, exhibition or publication.

Actions

- **Photograph the place from a good vantage point**, showing as many associated features as can be seen in a single frame or in a number of connecting photos. It is important and useful to record a sense of the environment of the site.
- **Photograph individual features and objects** that help in understanding its Chinese associations.
- When taking the photos, **write down the details of each frame in sequence**. Note on the sketch plan where each photo was taken and the direction of the view (a simple circle and arrow is best). This will help later in linking the photos to your written notes and sketch plan.

STEP 7 — Why is it important? Assessing the heritage significance of a place

Before assessing the heritage significance of a place, understand its history and physical characteristics. Without this knowledge it may not be possible to state clearly why the place is important. Assessing significance based on hearsay or myths is not a good basis for making decisions about the future, conservation, funding or heritage register listing of a place.

Undertaking a systematic assessment will help you to work out exactly why a place is important and what different aspects of the place make it significant.

One way of working through the assessment of a place is to apply established criteria used to assess places for entry into heritage registers. These criteria vary slightly from state to state, but are all similar to the criteria for the Commonwealth's Register of the National Estate.

The following discussion is based on the Register of the National Estate criteria and is representative of the various criteria used around Australia. If you are going to nominate a place for a heritage register or are undertaking a study associated with a statutory planning process, be sure to refer to the criteria used by the heritage agency in your state or territory.

The following discussion concentrates on applying criteria to Chinese Australian places. You only need to demonstrate significance against one criterion to show that a place has heritage value although most places with heritage value will probably be significant under more than one criterion.

Additional examples of significant Chinese Australian heritage places are included in **Step 7 of *Tracking the Dragon — a guide for finding and assessing Chinese Australian heritage places***.

Heritage criteria — a discussion

Criterion 1 — The importance of the place in the course or pattern of the history of the nation, state, territory or region.

The 'course or pattern' of history is made up of the events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community. The Chinese settlement of Australia has been a major element in the course and pattern of the history of the nation and of the Chinese Australian community.

A place meets this criterion if it:

- shows evidence of a significant Chinese settlement, occupation or activity
- is associated with a significant event or historical phase in Chinese Australian history, and/or
- maintains or shows the continuity of a historical process or activity associated with Chinese Australian history.



A place would not meet this criterion if it:

- has only incidental connections with historically important events, activities or processes in Chinese Australian history
- is associated with events, activities or processes of doubtful historical importance, and/or
- has been so altered that it can no longer provide evidence of, or be considered symbolically important because of, a particular historical association.

Criterion 2 — The place possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the history of the nation, state or territory.

These uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the history of a place might demonstrate a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design which is no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

In a number of states the criteria for rarity is interpreted as qualifying other criteria, rather than as a criterion used in isolation. For example, a place might be significant if it is important in the course or pattern of history and is rare. Assessors should check the particular criteria of the state or territory in which they are nominating a Chinese Australian place.

Comparing similar places can help identify those that are special- they may be rare or good examples of a particular type. Judging the rarity of a place largely depends on the amount of comparative information available. For help in finding comparable places, check the *Chinese Australian Heritage Bibliography* and the *Chinese Australian Sites Database* in this toolkit, your state heritage agency and local government planner or heritage adviser. If comparative research is poor, it should be made clear that the assessment of rarity is based on limited current information and may need to be revised as further research is undertaken.

Rarity is also relative to the size of the population being considered — hence it is important to state whether the assessment of rarity is in a global, national, state, regional or local context. Rarity is also relative to the particular historical context, so a specific type of building might be rare in terms of its Chinese associations, but common in other contexts. Similarly, a place might be rare for its period, but common in other periods. The particular context for the claim of rarity should be clearly stated in the assessment.

It is also important to state whether the place was always rare (ie that few ever existed) or is rare now because only a few survive of the many that once existed.

A place might be ‘endangered’ because the class of similar places as a whole is threatened by redevelopment or redundancy.

A place might meet this criterion of being uncommon, rare or endangered if it were:

- a good example of a type originally few in number
- a sole survivor or one of a few remaining examples of a type that was once more common, and
- a good example of a type that is being actively depleted due to development or redundancy.

A place would not meet this criterion if it were:

- not rare
- of a type that is not being depleted despite a perceived threat
- rare in a local context but numerous or abundant elsewhere.

Criterion 3 — The potential of the place to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the history of the nation, state or territory.

Some heritage places have value as a source of important information — they have research potential. The important qualifying test in assessing places under this criterion is the degree of confidence that can be placed in the claim that the place has research potential. This is particularly important at sites being assessed for their archaeological potential.

A sound basis must exist for assessing that the place has demonstrated or potential research value inherent in its fabric and that the information to be yielded by the place is likely to contribute significantly to our knowledge of the past.

The educational use and potential for interpreting places are attributes which relate more to management opportunities rather than to intrinsic significance, and are not included under this criterion.

A place might meet this criterion of having research potential if it can be demonstrated that it can contribute:

- new and worthwhile information through the study of its elements — structures, site, archaeological deposit and/or contents
- knowledge not available from any other information source, such as documents, photos or oral history
- knowledge not found at other places, and/or
- knowledge that is relevant to research questions being asked by those in the historical, architectural, archaeological or other research fields.

A place might not meet this criterion if:

- the four dot points above cannot be satisfied — the simple existence of archaeological deposits is not sufficient to satisfy this criterion. The value or likely value of the deposits must be demonstrated, or
- a building is valued for an unusual feature which is referred to in the documentary sources but is no longer part of the surviving fabric.

While a place which has had its research potential fully exhausted may not meet this criterion, it may be eligible for other criteria for its historical associations, technological or architectural values.

Criterion 4 — The importance of the place in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of the nation, state or territory's heritage places.

Some heritage places are good examples of their type. They are important because they demonstrate the principal characteristics of a human activity in the Australian environment (including a way of life, custom, process, land use, function, design or technique).

Every place is an example of its type, but this criterion tries to identify those places that are particularly valuable because they provide a good understanding of their type. To be a good example, a place should usually have high integrity (it should be intact and 'authentic' to its type). Some places with only moderate integrity might still be important under this criterion if others places of the type have been completely lost or are substantially less intact. The place can then be both a good example (criterion 4) and rare (criterion 2) at the same time.

Some places may be important because they show regional variations of their class or type. In the case of Chinese Australian places, these variations may relate to the Chinese districts of origin of the people associated with these places, or may result from differing regional patterns of work or lifestyle in Australia.



A place might meet this criterion if:

- it represents all or a larger number of the distinguishing characteristics of the class than is common — it might have attributes typical of a particular way of life, custom, process, land use, function, design or technique (such as a Chinese gold mining area)
- the physical evidence demonstrating a range of characteristics is particularly intact and well-preserved, compared with others of the class (such as an intact temple)
- the place has a large number of class characteristics from one point in time, but also possesses a wider range of physical characteristics representing changes over time that are historically important within the class (such as a Chinese store continuously operated over a long period), and/or
- the place is part of a group of places that collectively illustrate a particular type (such as a 'Chinatown').

The more completely a place shows the characteristics of its type, and the fewer the number of similar examples that exist, the more significance the place will have.

A place would not meet this criterion if it:

- is a poor example of its type
- does not include or has lost a substantial number of elements typical of a class of place, compared with other known examples
- cannot be demonstrated to be an important example of its type compared with other examples of similar completeness and integrity, and/or
- does not represent well the characteristics that makes up a significant variation of a type.

Criterion 5 — The importance of the place in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the community or cultural group.

A place may have aesthetic heritage value because the form, scale, colour, texture and material of a building and its setting, or a site, appeals to a community's ideas of beauty or grandeur. It may also comply with formal aesthetic rules. In the case of Chinese Australian heritage places, applying the principles of feng-shui, for example, is a set of formal aesthetic (and social) rules. In some cases, the smells and sounds associated with a site contribute to its aesthetic significance.

A place may meet this criterion if it is:

- a place built to traditional form, design and craftsmanship
- a distinctive landmark
- a place particularly important to the community because of its appearance (including being aesthetically distinctive), and/or
- a place or series of places complying to formal rules of design (such as feng-shui).

A place might meet this criterion if:

- its aesthetic values cannot be clearly stated, and/or
- its aesthetic values cannot be said to be important compared with other places.

Criterion 6 — The importance of the place in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

This criterion applies only where the place has evidence of specific innovation or technical creativity or achievement particular to that place (eg the place had a seminal impact). It could also have a particularly good (and perhaps rare) example of an innovation or innovative application of existing technology which is superior to other existing examples. This might occur, for instance, in the fields of engineering, architecture, industrial design or landscape design. If a place simply includes a good example of an interesting technology or design also found at other places, it should be assessed under Criterion 4.

The capacity of the place to demonstrate the creative or technical achievement is important — if the place has deteriorated or been altered to the extent that such evidence is lost, the power of demonstration is probably also lost.

A place might meet this criterion if it:

- shows, or is associated with, an important creative or technical innovation or achievement, and/or
- is the inspiration for an important creative or technical innovation or achievement.

A place might not meet this criterion if it has:

- lost its design or technical integrity, and/or
- only a loose association with a creative or technical achievement (for example, is one of many places resulting from the same innovation).

Criterion 7 — The place's strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

This criterion is usually described as 'social significance', and is about the value of the place for the current community or cultural group. It includes places that are the continuing focus of spiritual, traditional, economic, political or other social or cultural sentiment for the community.

Social significance can only be identified by the community or group itself. It is identified by seeking the opinion of community members, or by observing the way in which the community relates to a place. All places are likely to have some degree of social value to some part of the community, but those with social heritage value will be the ones that are held in strong and special regard by all or a part of the community. They stand out in the community's collective mind as being important to today's society.

Social significance can change quickly over time, for example as the community learns more about the history of a place, or as values within the community or group change. Places that have current but probably short-lived amenity value to a community, such as a local supermarket, would usually not be assessed as having heritage value.

A place might meet this criterion because it is:

- a place of strong and special value to the current community, compared with other places
- a place important in maintaining the community or group's sense of identity
- a place that has become important to the community or group because of use over a long period
- a place associated with an event or person venerated by the community, and/or
- a place that has special meaning to the community's religious, cultural, educational or social life.

A place would not meet this criterion if it:

- is only important to the community for short-term amenity reasons, and/or
- cannot be shown to be of particular importance to the community or group.

Criterion 8 — The special association of the place with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the history of the nation, state, territory or region.

The key to this criterion are the words 'special association', and 'group or persons of importance'. Assessing for this criterion should show why the association between a person or group and the place is more significant than other associations the person or group may have had with any other place. It may be that the association was long-lived or that the place was a significant part of the person or group's life and works.

It should also be demonstrated that the person or group is important in the history of the locality or wider area.

Places containing direct evidence of the association in its fabric would generally be seen as being more significant than places where such evidence did not exist. This may also apply if it can be demonstrated that a person's association with the place has affected other notable aspects of the person's life or works.

Other than in exceptional cases, transitory associations with notable individuals do not make a place significant.

A place might meet this criterion if the:

- person or group associated with the place is important in the history of the locality or wider area, and/or the
- association between the person or group and the place is special.

A place would not meet this criterion if it:

- has only incidental or insubstantial associations with an historically important person or group
- provides evidence of people or groups that are of doubtful historical importance, and/or
- has been so altered that it can no longer provide evidence of a particular association.

Compare your place with others

Comparative assessment should be part of any consideration of these criteria. While assessing the particular values of a place, you will usually have to think about comparisons between this place and others and ask 'why is this one important?'

Comparative assessment can be difficult if research on other places is unavailable. For help in finding comparable places, check the *Chinese Australian Heritage Bibliography* and the *Chinese Australian Sites Database* in this toolkit.

Comparative assessment is not meant to suggest that there is only enough room for one significant place of a given type. Places might be significant in a local, regional, state or national context. Comparative assessment is meant to help decide how important a place is compared with others in these differing contexts.

The aim of a comparative study of Chinese temples, for example, would be to determine:

- which attributes of one temple are typical or rare (in regional, state and national contexts)
- which aspects of different temples are well-preserved and which are not, and
- how the physical characteristics of the various temples, and their development histories, compare and contrast.

Such a study would enable a clear statement to be made about what was important about a particular temple.

The questions to ask include:

- how many other places like this one are there in the region, state, territory or nation?
- how important is this place compared to similar places and what makes it important?
- is this place rare, or a good example of its type?

Levels of significance

Heritage places have different levels of significance. They may be valued by local, regional or state communities or be valued at national or international levels. Understanding the level of significance is an important guide to determining the appropriate level of conservation and management to apply to a place.

A place may be locally significant, that is, valued by a small local community or group because it relates to local history and settlement. It may also be important to its sense of identity.

Some places will be important in the pattern of a state's historical settlement, and others will be significant to the whole Australian community, or even the world's. To members of a small community, locally significant places might be just as important to them as the World Heritage area next door. What might be different is how the level of significance influences the way the place is conserved and managed. It is important to think about the level of significance of a place so that the appropriate level of conservation and management is applied.

Important indicators of the level of significance are:

- the intensity with which the place is valued and
- the size of the community that values it.

A place is likely to be significant if it:

- can demonstrate clearly the values or associations felt to be important
- has well-documented associations with the historical events, people or community recognised as being important
- is unusually intact or in exceptionally good condition compared with others of its type
- can be shown to be an early, influential, or crowning example within a particular phase, period, or type of place which is important to the Chinese Australian experience
- is a particularly good example of a type of place (a comparison should be explicit), and/or
- is a rare example of an important type of place, in that few were built, or few have survived.

Having considered these questions, you should be able to say whether the place is of low, moderate, high or of exceptional heritage significance, within a local, regional, state or national context.

Examples of different levels of significance are provided among the statements of significance in the next step.

Statements of significance

STEP 8 — Write a statement of significance

A statement of significance is simply a short statement that summarises the key reasons why a place is important.

It is a useful statement that can explain to others why a place is important, can be used in displays, signs and brochures, and is a necessary part of any nomination of a place to a heritage register.

Example statements of significance for Chinese Australian heritage places

These examples are for places with different levels of significance.

Sue Wah Chin Building, Darwin, NT

This statement of significance, from the Register of the National Estate, indicates that the place, a single-storey terrace of five shops, is important in Darwin's Chinese history. **It is of local significance.**

Chinese people were numerically dominant in Darwin until 1911, and they dominated the commerce of the town until World War II. This site is of outstanding significance as the most intact and visible reminder of the antiquity and importance of the Chinese presence in Darwin. The building has close associations with the Chin family, the most numerous Chinese family in Darwin today. The building makes a positive contribution to the Cavenagh Street streetscape, and it is held in high esteem by the Darwin community for its historic and other social values.

Wing Hing Long & Co Store, Tingha, NSW

This statement of significance, from the NSW Heritage Register, indicates that this small complex of buildings operated as a Chinese general store and residence from 1881 to 1998. **This place is significant at the local, regional and state levels.**

Wing Hing Long occupies a central position on the main street of Tingha. Its structure, fabric, and archival and movable heritage collections provide a unique documentation of the continuous and significant contribution of Chinese Australians and of general stores to the history of retailing in regional New South Wales. They also provide significant insight into the rise and decline of the tin mining community in which the store is located.

Temple of Hou Wang, Atherton, Queensland

This statement of significance from the *Chinese Australian Heritage Places Database* indicates **that the temple is of very high local and regional significance** and is a rare type within the small 'set' of surviving temples. **It is highly significant in the state and national context.**

The temple is considered significant because of its importance as a site of Chinese Australian settlement which proved highly successful as a commercial centre despite the opposition of European Australians. The contribution of Chinese labour to the development of the Atherton Tableland has often been overlooked. The Temple of Hou Wang is historically important for its strong association with Southern Chinese settlers. It is a rare example both as a temple dedicated to Hou Wang — there are understood to be only about six such temples world wide (one is known in Kowloon and one on Tai O) — and as a timber temple (most are of brick or stone... it is the only timber temple in Australia or New Zealand still extant and possibly in North America and SE Asia. As such it is an unparalleled example of temples built by overseas Chinese.

Its roof lines and the use of vertical and horizontally placed corrugated iron sheeting give it an unusual and somewhat modest appearance which belies its extensive use of now-valuable timbers — Red Cedar and Black Bean. Its dimly lit interior provides a remarkable aesthetic appeal when viewed with the elaborate carvings and ornaments in their relative positions.

The Temple is no longer actively used but it retains a strong religious association for some visitors. Its close association with Chinese culture in an alien environment, its rarity and its setting are such that it is regarded as having a particularly high value as a cultural site.

Place records

STEP 9 — Prepare a place record

- **share the information**
- **nominate the place**

Having now assessed the heritage significance of the place, it is extremely useful to make a record of the place that will explain to others what the place is and why it is important. This is called a 'place record' and should include:

- the name of the place
- its address or location (include a map reference if outside a city or town)
- a description of boundaries
- an indication of who owns the place
- a summary of its history (as researched above)
- a description of existing physical characteristics and setting
- an assessment of condition and intactness
- information on its current usage
- a plan or map of the place, supported by photographs and
- a statement of significance (as assessed above)

A place record can be used to:

- publicise the place within the community
- seek funding for conservation (your state or territory heritage agency, the Australian Heritage Commission or the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage can provide information on grant programs — see **Useful contacts** at the end of this guide), and to
- supply information for nomination forms for heritage registers at all levels (nomination forms are available from your state or territory heritage agency or the Australian Heritage Commission — again see **Useful contacts** in the **Resources** section of this guide).

Action

Use the Sample place record opposite to help you to **prepare your own record**.

Share the information you have gathered and the heritage significance you have documented with others who are interested in the place.

You may also choose to **nominate the place** for inclusion in a heritage register or upgrade a previous, less detailed listing.

The place record can also be used to submit a record for the Chinese Australian Heritage Place Database with the possibility of either updating a record that already exists or to add a new one. The record can be submitted by email to: ahc@ea.gov.au.

Nominations for heritage registers can be made to the relevant state or territory heritage agency and to the Australian Heritage Commission, GPO Box 787, Canberra ACT 2601.



Sample place record

For a Chinese Australian Heritage Place

Answer these questions as fully as you can.

1. What is the name of the place?*

*A place might have more than one name. It could have a Chinese name, an historical English name and a current name. List them all, but highlight the name by which you think the place should be known.

2. Where is it?*


*Describe the place's location and boundaries. Give its street address if in a town or city, and its property location, map reference and name, direction and distance from the nearest town if it is in a rural or remote area. If you know the local government area, name it. Attach a plan of the place, marking its heritage boundary, and a map of its location, especially if in a rural or remote area.

3. Describe the place*

*Include information about the place's physical appearance and features, highlighting those that make it important as a Chinese Australian place. Describe the place in relation to its setting or surroundings and in relation to other places nearby that are also of heritage importance. List or describe any objects or artefacts in the place that are important. Make sure that your sketch plan of the place identifies any important features.

4. Summarise its history*

*Indicate when and why the place was built or established and when it first had a Chinese association (if not established by Chinese originally). Indicate if and when Chinese associations with the place ceased. Describe the nature of the association with Chinese individuals, families and communities, historically and today if the place continues to be important to Chinese Australians.



5. What is its condition?*

*Is the place in need of repair? Is it being used appropriately? Has it been altered and if so, do the alterations detract from the significance of the place? Is it under any threat of further change or destruction?

6. Statement of significance*

*Attach the statement of significance you have prepared using this guide.

7. Who owns the place?*

*Indicate who owns the place, if this information is available.

8. Other information about the place*

*List any books, articles, photographs, oral histories etc that relate specifically to this place. Attach relevant copies of historical and current photographs (don't attach originals of old photos — they could be lost or damaged).

9. List your contact details*

*Provide your name, address, phone, fax and email contact details in case further details are needed about the information on this form or so that you can be informed of the success of entry in a register or database. If you don't want your name released to others, say so.



Summary

Congratulations! If you have completed these steps then you now know much more about your local Chinese Australian heritage places. You know their stories and better understand their role in Australia's heritage.

The information you have gathered will be important for future generations and may also form the basis for greater protection through listing the place in a heritage register.

The stories behind these places are there for current generations to enjoy as well, so don't forget to share what you have uncovered. Who knows, sharing these stories may lead to further exciting discoveries!

If you have found this guide useful — please spread the word and encourage others to seek out and assess their Chinese Australian heritage places.

The places of our Chinese Australian heritage are among the many which reflect Australia's journey into the richly diverse society that it is today.

COMPONENT 5

Chinese Australian Sites Database

The *Chinese Australian Sites Database* is an initial compilation of information held in various state and territory heritage registers, the Register of the National Estate and lists compiled by the Museum of Chinese Australian History. The database indicates the register from which information has been extracted.

The information in the database is incomplete reflecting the state of the data in the parent registers and showing the need for active research and recording of Chinese Australian heritage places. It is a tool to which researchers can contribute, by updating and expanding its contents. Information that could be included in the database can be emailed to ahc@ea.gov.au.

Most of the parent heritage databases can be accessed through the Australian Heritage Places Inventory (www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi). These are worth checking, given that they will continue to grow.

The brief analysis below indicates the current nature of the database and the challenges in developing a more comprehensive inventory of Chinese Australian heritage places.

The database was funded through the National Estate Grants Program. It was developed by a team coordinated by Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, for the Museum of Chinese Australian History in Melbourne.

Analysis of the Chinese Australian Heritage Places Database

The database is the first attempt to bring together information about Chinese Australian places across the country. It is only as good as the information upon which it is based and at this stage, many gaps exist in that information. Of the 440 places in the database in April 2001, a number have no information beyond the site name and specific or general location.

The distribution of places by state and territory is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Database records by State/Territory (rounded to the nearest whole number)

	NT	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	Tas	SA	Total
No of records	48	52	195	15	74	52	4	440
% of database	11%	12%	44%	3%	17%	12%	1%	100%

The high proportion of Victorian records reflects both the systematic survey of mining sites in the state and the legacy of the Victoria's large Chinese population during and since the goldrushes. Other states, such as Queensland and NSW, are under-represented. This probably reflects the lack of systematic surveys and entries of Chinese Australian related places in heritage registers in those states.

The problem of clearly identifying Chinese mining remains is evident in the database. In a number of cases, the entry contains no information to verify the recorder's assumption that the place resulted from Chinese mining.

The database includes many buildings in 'Chinatowns' in capital cities and rural towns. The patchy information presented in these records shows the need for more intensive recording and assessment work particularly involving the appropriate Chinese Australian communities. The records relating to historical and architectural significance are the strongest, and those relating to social significance are the weakest. Many of the site-types identified in the toolkit component *A brief overview of Chinese life and heritage places in Australia* are as yet poorly represented or totally absent from the database.



The Chinese Australian Sites Database

The following database form can be used to format any additions or changes to the database.

The following sample place record based on that used for the *Chinese Australian Sites Database* should be used in collecting data where possible. This database can then be used to export multiple records to the online database.

Sample Place Record

(Please insert up-to-date Sample place record from Tracking the Dragon page B29)