

2011-01-22 LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES FOR THE RIM VILLAGE REGENERATION PROJECT.

This document is drafted to inform the decision making process with regard to the repairs and renovations currently being undertaken on the Garrison Church, the old Anglican Parsonage [Hse no. 40], Houses numbered 35, 36,37,39 and 49.

Currently RIM, and particularly their conservation architect, appears in our opinion to be unaware of certain binding legal requirements and conservation principles.

1. It must once again be pointed out that all the work, **that means all the work** currently being carried out **is illegal**. The consequences for RIM would be dire should the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris and the South African media be informed of this.
2. South Africa is a signatory to the UNESCO International Convention on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS, also referred to as the 1969 Venice Charter and its later revisions.
3. The SAHRA permit issued in 2004 has a specific injunction to RIM to use the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter as their standard.
4. Article 42 of the Burra Charter reads:

4.2 *Traditional techniques and materials are preferred for the conservation of significant fabric. In some circumstances modern techniques and materials which offer substantial conservation benefits may be appropriate.*

5. My task as heritage consultant is to provide a heritage statement to supplement the permit application to SAHRA to better inform the decision making process. Part of that significance is determining cultural significance. Article 5.2. of the Burra Charter reads:

5.2 *Relative degrees of cultural significance may lead to different conservation actions at a place.*

6. The Church and the Parsonage [no. 40] form a unit as the one cannot function without the other. They are contemporaneous ca 1841 and are the oldest buildings to survive on the Island from that period. The church has not lost its original integrity although it can no longer be said to be authentic as parts of the physical fabric have been completely replaced. The Parsonage still has a similar integrity at its core. Article 11 of the Burra Charter provides for this:

Article 11. Related places and objects

The contribution which related places and related objects make to the cultural significance of the place should be retained.

7. It would be a contradiction and negation of the principle of the **process** provided by article 14:

Article 14. Conservation processes

Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a *use*; retention of *associations* and *meanings*; *maintenance*, *preservation*, *restoration*, *reconstruction*, *adaptation* and *interpretation*; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

8. The plaster, paint type and colour scheme of the parsonage should not be written in the RIM stone of 1992. The Burra Charter again:

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

Circumstances now permit the reversal of poorly made decisions not thoroughly thought through made previously.

9. As heritage practitioners we all have an understanding that historical layering of the fabric should be taken into account. These are, however, dependent on the determination of cultural significance. There is now enough evidence to suggest that House number 39 was the very first residence to be built by the prisons on the island in 1963. This is only one year after prisons physically moved onto the island. My contention is that this significance will determine how the building will be conserved in future.

15.4 The contributions of all aspects of *cultural significance* of a *place* should be respected. If a place includes *fabric*, *uses*, *associations* or *meanings* of different periods, or different aspects of cultural significance, emphasising or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasised or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.

10. RIM has completely ignored, and continues to do so, a fundamental principle of conservation. To wit:

Article 16. Maintenance

Maintenance is fundamental to *conservation* and should be undertaken where *fabric* is of *cultural significance* and its maintenance is necessary to retain that *cultural significance*.

11. The following was not done by RIM and they still refuse it to be done on this project:

Conservation Practice

Article 26. Applying the Burra Charter process

- 26.1 Work on a *place* should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.
- 26.2 Written statements of *cultural significance* and policy for the *place* should be prepared, justified and accompanied by supporting evidence. The statements of significance and policy should be incorporated into a management plan for the place.
- 26.3 Groups and individuals with *associations* with a place as well as those involved in its management should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in understanding the *cultural significance* of the place. Where appropriate they should also have opportunities to participate in its *conservation* and management.