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Eklund, E. (2017). "Negotiating industrial heritage and regional identity in three Australian regions." *Public Historian* 39(4): 44-64.

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Negotiating Industrial Heritage and Regional Identity in Three Australian Regions

Erik Eklund

ABSTRACT: This article investigates the relationship between industrial heritage and regional identity during deindustrialization in three Australian regions. Newcastle, in the state of New South Wales (NSW), was a coal-mining and steel-production center located north of Sydney. Wollongong, also in NSW, was a coal-mining and steel-production region centered around Port Kembla, near the town of Wollongong. The Latrobe Valley was a brown coal-mining and electricity-production center east of Melbourne. All regions display a limited profile for industrial heritage within their formal policies and representations. In Newcastle and Wollongong, the adoption of the language of the postindustrial city has limited acknowledgement of the industrial past, while the Latrobe Valley's industrial heritage is increasingly framed by concerns over current economic challenges and climate change.

KEY WORDS: industrial heritage, authorized heritage discourse, regional history, deindustrialization

Introduction

This article investigates the relationship between industrial heritage and regional identity during deindustrialization in three Australian regions. A comparative assessment of these three Australian regions provides an opportunity to explore how similar regions encountered deindustrialization and the specific and varying outcomes of these encounters. The regions were all coal-mining centers that subsequently industrialized, but they did so in different time periods and with different industries. Newcastle, in the state of New South Wales (NSW), was a coal-mining and steel-production center located on a river port 150 kilometers north of Sydney. After the opening of coal mines in the earliest colonial period in 1801, it developed larger engineering, smelting, and manufacturing industries in the late nineteenth century and an iron and steel works beginning in 1915. Wollongong, also in NSW but 80 kilometers south of Sydney, was a coal-mining and steel-production region centered around Port Kembla, a port just 5 kilometers south of the town of Wollongong. Coal mining began in the 1840s, and it too industrialized after about 1908

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 44–64 (November 2017). ISSN: 0272-3433, electronic ISSN 1533-8576. © 2017 by The Regents of the University of California and the National Council on Public History. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2017.39.4.44>.

with new smelting and manufacturing industries and eventually an iron and steel works in 1929. The Latrobe Valley was a brown coal-mining and electricity-production center located 150 kilometers east of Melbourne in the state of Victoria. Coal mining began in the Latrobe Valley in a sporadic way in the 1890s, but it was the passage of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria Act through the Victorian parliament in 1921 that ushered in a new era of government-owned and sponsored coal mining and electricity generation.

Statement of Argument

In the following analysis I explore the history of each region and its turn toward deindustrialization. The common thread across the three sites is that industrial heritage has a limited or low profile despite the importance of the industrial age in shaping the urban and cultural development of the regions. The specific economic and social effects of deindustrialization have meant that the industrial past has not become clearly integrated into regional identity. That industry still operates in the three regions has also meant that the industrial past is not so readily idealized. In the Australian context, as we will see, the move has been to emphasize (in some regions more than others) a future that does not build on industrial heritage so much as attempt to transcend it with a new language of the postindustrial city.

The principal methodological focus is on the official policies or statements about heritage, history, and tourism that can be found in local government heritage policies and tourism websites. I sample each of the “Visit” websites (“Visit Newcastle,” “Visit Wollongong,” and “Visit Latrobe Valley”) to assess the prominence and accessibility of industrial heritage and industrial heritage themes. By doing so, this article explores the official presentation of the region’s past as promulgated by local government authorities and measures what Laurajane Smith has called the “Authorized Heritage Discourse” (AHD).¹ The article will also consider the heritage management strategies for each region and gauge the level of prominence of industrial heritage. Such an approach offers only a quick short-hand analysis of the issues but it does allow a common methodology across the three sites, and it provides an initial insight that can be checked through other sources.² Additionally, I employ a range of historical and contemporary sources to consider the issues of industrial heritage, deindustrialization, and regional identity. I have lived in all three of these regions and I also call upon my own personal experiences and memories to construct this analysis. I will make brief references to informal or vernacular commitments to industrial heritage. There are a range of organizations that care for museums, libraries, and industrial heritage, often staffed by volunteers, which

¹ Laurajane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

² I am influenced here by Chris Landorf, whose approach entailed a comparative analysis of six UK heritage management plans. See his article, “A Framework for Sustainable Heritage Management: A Study of UK Industrial Heritage Sites,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 15 (2009): 494–510.

are committed to preserving and interpreting the industrial past. These prove to be the exception in an otherwise rather negative picture and deserve much more space than I can devote to them here.

Australian Context

In Australia, postwar prosperity led to a strengthening of manufacturing, strong and virtually uninterrupted economic growth, and a rise in real wages over the long boom period from 1945 to 1972. During this time, Australia's federal government system settled into an agreed consensus over the role of the state and private enterprise. In this mixed economy, the state was highly interventionist in immigration, education, infrastructure development, and even in state ownership of banks, airlines, and electricity generation. A relatively stable political structure aided economic growth. There were controversial and potentially difficult issues to manage, especially in foreign relations, such as the Cold War and Australian military engagement, especially towards the end of the long boom. However, these issues, whether international or domestic, did not fundamentally overturn a strong consensus that supported a mixed economy, a state supportive of private enterprise with strong protectionist impulses, as well as a commitment to population growth through immigration and natural increase. From 7.6 million in 1947, the population grew to 12.8 million by 1971, with a large portion of that growth resulting from immigration. By 1971 almost one million males (or 25.2 percent of the male workforce) and three hundred thousand females (18 percent of the female workforce) were employed in the manufacturing industry.³ The capital cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne, included large inner-city areas and newer fringe suburbs that were a focus of manufacturing employment. Beyond the capital cities distinct regional loci of industrialization developed, often around a mining resource such as coal deposits or an important transport infrastructure such as a deep-water harbor, or both. This article samples three of those major regional conurbations of manufacturing employment. These regions were diverse in their structure and history, but all shared a strong industrial and mining sector and were particularly hard hit by waves of deindustrialization, which began in the mid-1970s. The Australian patterns and experiences of deindustrialization have strong similarities to the North America, Europe, and UK experiences. The order of their appearance in this article (Newcastle, Wollongong, Latrobe Valley) indicates an approximate chronology of industrial development from earliest to latest, although as we shall see, the patterns of deindustrialization were mixed and are in fact still playing out in these regions.

³ *Commonwealth Year Book* (Canberra: Australian Government Printer, 1973), 704cf; I. W. McLean, *Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Before considering each of the regions in turn, however, it is necessary to survey the state of industrial heritage in Australia and consider the wider national and state context in which each of these regions, and their key stakeholders, operate. This wider context shows very limited recognition for industrial heritage. Although the analysis that follows is critical of the standing of industrial heritage in our three industrial regions, the situation is very much indicative of a wider malaise driven by policies at the state and commonwealth government level.

As the postwar boom showed signs of wavering in the late 1960s, new social movements and concerns began to manifest in Australia (and elsewhere), which focused on quality of life, citizenship engagement, and government transparency. The long boom had delivered a strong economic harvest for white, male, working-class men in particular, but economic transformation and urban growth also destroyed large swaths of the natural and the older built environments.⁴ As the thrall of the long boom lost its luster, social movements emerged that began to question this overwhelming commitment to growth. What were the costs of rapid growth and what elements of the natural and built environments were being lost in the process? The National Trust was established in NSW in 1945. Other Australian states followed, and an Australian Council of National Trusts was formed in 1965 to lobby at a federal level. The early focus on preserving and maintaining colonial buildings that were seen to be architecturally significant soon expanded to include protection of the natural environment.⁵

The emergence of industrial heritage can also be linked to the opening up of the humanities and the growth of social history or “history from below” championed by the New Left and others. Initially, the heritage movement focused on the efforts to preserve large private estates or ornate public buildings, with architects taking a leading role. For example, Camden Park, southwest of Sydney and home of the well-connected and influential Macarthur family, was placed on the National Heritage Register in 1978.⁶ Yet there was an increasing sense that this kind of heritage lacked representation of working-class experience. Mining and industrial workplaces were overwhelmingly sites of significance for the working class. In Australia, although there were some exceptions, industrial architecture lacked a strong sense of aesthetic and architectural grandeur, unlike the finely worked buildings and factories in the Ruhr region of Germany, for example. However, these sites nevertheless

4 Geoffrey Bolton, *The Middle Way, 1942–1988. The Oxford History of Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 89–139.

5 Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); M. Crommelin, “Commonwealth Involvement in Environmental Policy: Past, Present and Future,” *Environmental and Planning Law Journal* 101, no. 4 (April 1987) 100–112; Bolton, *Oxford History*, 200–204.

6 Peter Spearritt, “Money, Taste and Industrial Heritage,” *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 96 (April 1991): 34–35. For the Macarthur estate listing see NSW Government Office of Environment and Heritage website, <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5045133>.

became treasured objects across local landscapes and increasingly in the national one.⁷

Another catalyst for a growing appreciation of industrial heritage was the first wave of deindustrialization in the mid-1970s. As historian Lucy Taksa noted, when an artifact or building becomes threatened and loses its commonplace disposition, it is more likely to be identified as a valued part of the past and become an exemplar of a vanishing thing. Deindustrialization meant the abandonment or demolition of a number of old commercial and industrial buildings. Those located in Sydney or Melbourne were especially high profile and led to actions by an emerging urban protest movement. From 1972, for example, Sydney resident groups and the National Trust were joined by progressive trade unions in attempts to stop the widespread demolition of working-class neighborhoods and workplaces for new freeways.⁸ These challenges were backed up by legislation at the commonwealth and then state levels that required protection for heritage, the first being the Australian Heritage Commission Act of 1975.

By 1989, the term “industrial heritage” was well-known enough to be a theme for NSW in its heritage week activities, yet still, in 1991, historian Peter Spearritt could write that “Industrial heritage in Australia is usually thought of as a residual category.”⁹ The debate over heritage in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s was overwhelmingly a debate about environmental conservation in the face of proposals to mine or log native forests.¹⁰ In this formulation, heritage most often appeared to the general public as the opposite of development and an antonym of industry. Heritage could only exist in the absence of industry or if industry was limited and its operation regulated. That heritage might reside within the industrial workplaces (and indeed the wider industrial assemblage of community and housing) was an anathema. Putting together the words “industrial” and “heritage” formed an apparent oxymoron that struggled to find wider cultural and political acceptance in the 1980s and 1990s.

7 C. T. Stannage, *Western Australia's Heritage: The Pioneer Myth* (Nedlands, Western Australia: University of Western Australia, 1985); Keir Reeves, Erik Eklund, Andrew Reeves, Bruce Scates, and Vicki Peel, “Broken Hill: Rethinking the Significance of the Material Culture and Intangible Heritage of the Australian Labour Movement,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 17, no. 4 (July 2011): 301–17.

8 Kathy Sport, “Save Our Homes: Activist Documentaries 1970–1985,” *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, Spring 2003, 138–47, <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=829675404151510;res=IELLCC>; Lucy Taksa, “Machines and Ghosts: Politics, Industrial Heritage and the History of Working Life at the Eveleigh Workshops,” *Labour History*, no. 85 (November 2003): 65–70.

9 Spearritt, “Money, Taste and Industrial Heritage,” 34. Similar concerns have been expressed over the fate of industrial heritage in the UK and Ireland. See Michael Nevell, “Editorial: Industrial Heritage at Risk,” *Industrial Archaeology Review* 33, no. 2 (November 2011): 79–80. Another valuable and more recent survey is Taksa, “Machines and Ghosts,” 65–88.

10 See Hutton and Connors, *History of the Australian Environment Movement*. I am also drawing on a survey of major Australian newspapers over the period to make this point.

Newcastle

Newcastle, permanently occupied since 1804, was designed as a place of hard labor and punishment for recalcitrant convicts transported to the Australian colonies. It was established only sixteen years after the first occupation of the Australian continent by the British at Sydney Cove in 1788. Apart from its isolation from the newly established settlement at Sydney, Newcastle, as the colonists eventually called it, had an attractive natural harbor, a river that offered potential access to inland areas, and a series of outcropping coal seams. The town developed in a modest way with a convict workforce of up to 150 men and women who labored in the town's mines, cut timber upriver, or performed other hard labor around the settlement. As the convict station was overtaken by changes in penal policy, the last prisoners were removed from Newcastle and the expanding coal mines were worked by free labor.¹¹

Pit-top villages developed in and around Newcastle, displacing the local Indigenous Awabakal and Worimi people. These first mines laid the basis for a more diversified labor market with substantial growth in the mining workforce from the 1850s and 1860s. Mining required engineering and transport infrastructures and ancillary industries, and by the end of the nineteenth century, Newcastle had developed a more substantial industrial base and coal mining had increasingly moved west into the lower Hunter Valley.¹² The crucial date was 1915, when one of Australia's largest and most influential mining companies, the Broken Hill Propriety Ltd (BHP), opened an integrated iron and steel works in Newcastle. In the following decades, BHP established downstream industries to transform iron and steel products and bought into the region's coal industry. By the 1920s, Newcastle was a nationally important industrial center with a growing range of manufacturing industries and an increasingly busy commercial port.¹³

The two world wars brought tremendous economic and industrial upheaval, but they also reinforced the importance of Australian-based iron and steel production as well as Australian manufacturing. After 1945, in conditions of steadily increasing prosperity, industrial centers such as Newcastle, Wollongong, and the Latrobe Valley all experienced steady population growth through immigration and natural increase. In Newcastle, the population grew from 127,188 in 1947 to 146,009 by 1971

¹¹ Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, vol. 1, *The Beginning* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997); J. W. Turner, *Coal Mining in Newcastle, 1801 to 1900* (Newcastle: Newcastle City Council, 1982); "Shortland, Jun., To J. Shortland, Sen. HMS Reliance, Sydney Cove, Port Jackson," in *Historical Records of New South Wales*, ed. F. M. Bladen, vol. 3, *Hunter 1796–1799* (Sydney: C. Potter, Govt. Printer, 1895), 481–82.

¹² David Branagan, *Geology and Coal Mining in the Hunter Valley, 1791–1861* (Newcastle, NSW: Newcastle Public Library, 1972); Gifford H. Eardley, *The Railways of the South Maitland Coalfields* (Sydney: Australian Railway Historical Society, NSW Division, 1969).

¹³ L. E. Fredman, "Goninan, Alfred (1865–1953) and Ralph Williams Goninan (1874–1948), Engineers," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ed. John Ritchie, vol. 14 (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 291–92. Also available at <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A140330b.htm>.

with further population growth in nearby Lake Macquarie and the lower Hunter Valley. BHP Newcastle remained the largest Australian steel plant until 1955 (when it was overtaken by the steelworks at Port Kembla, another BHP controlled entity). At its peak, BHP Newcastle employed twelve thousand workers in 1960, and the business enjoyed steady prosperity until 1975.¹⁴

Economic conditions worsened in western countries beginning in the early 1970s. The oil crisis of 1973 to 1974 produced a spike in inflation. The unemployment rate, which had been below 2 percent for more than two decades, began to climb upwards. Across the Newcastle region unemployment grew steadily from 1.7 percent in 1970 to 5.7 percent in 1981 and then peaked again during the recession of the early 1990s at 16.7 percent in February 1993. The major effect of this long-term economic crisis was a decline in Newcastle's population from 146,009 in 1971 to 129,490 in 1986, reversing the solid growth of the postwar period.¹⁵ In Newcastle, the first sign of a problem occurred in 1976 when the State Dockyard was threatened with closure. Seventy-five percent of the workforce, or 1,500 workers, were retrenched by the end of that year, with the Dockyard closing altogether in 1987.¹⁶ There were less high profile but equally concerning developments across the labor market more generally. Rising youth unemployment after 1975 increased the nation's concerns about the future of young workers.¹⁷

The Newcastle earthquake in late December 1989, which led to the deaths of thirteen people, also damaged a number of historic buildings. The earthquake was an unfortunate omen during a difficult period in the city's history. In the immediate aftermath, a number of hasty demolitions raised the ire of those concerned about the fate of the heritage fabric of the city. The aftermath of the earthquake galvanized the heritage movement, placed the council under close scrutiny, and concerted action ensured the survival of a number of significant inner-city buildings. This meant that when inner-city redevelopment gained momentum in the 1990s it was subject to oversight and major demolitions and unsympathetic development faced some resistance.¹⁸

14 *Commonwealth Year Book* (Canberra: Australian Government Printer, 1967), 175; *Commonwealth Year Book* (Canberra: Australian Government Printer, 1973), 704cf; Mike Donaldson, "Steel into the Eighties: The Rise and Rise of BHP," *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 10 (June 1981): 37-45.

15 The 1971 and 1986 census returns for the Newcastle Statistical District, NSW, accessed at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/ViewContent?readform&view=productsbyCatalogue&Action=Expand&Num=2.2>.

16 "A Municipal Titanic threatened by a looming iceberg of unemployment," *Canberra Times*, October 9, 1976.

17 For a useful statewide summary, see John Wilkinson, "Manufacturing and Services in New South Wales, Paper No.3/07," *NSW Parliamentary Library Research Service*, June 2007, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/manufacturing-and-services-in-nsw/ManuFINALandINDEX.pdf>.

18 Margaret Henry, "The Battle for Newcastle: Heritage and the Earthquake," *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 96 (April 1991): 102-16; Tess Campbell, "Quake Preservation Group Back at Beginning," *Newcastle Herald*, December 27, 2009, <http://www.theherald.com.au/story/450291/quake-preservation-group-back-at-beginning/multimedia/>.

Steady decline in manufacturing employment was capped by the 1997 announcement that BHP was to cease steelmaking in Newcastle by 1999. This decision alone was estimated to lead to the loss of 4,500 jobs both directly and indirectly. This announcement came after decades of minimal investment in the plant, as management scaled back growth plans and became far more cost conscious.¹⁹ The decline of manufacturing in the 1970s followed the erosion of coal-mining jobs in the 1960s and the consequent closure of rail lines connecting mines to the port of Newcastle.

Yet the Newcastle story is a complicated one in which industrial and mining production did not end with the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s. As the Chinese economy boomed in the early 2000s, Australian commodities, including coal and iron ore, began commanding higher and higher prices. In Newcastle, this led to a renaissance of coal extraction. As huge open-cut mines opened in the Upper Hunter Valley, Newcastle served as the primary export site of the area. Newcastle harbor once again became one of the busiest coal ports in Australia, moving 89 million metric tons of coal between 2007 and 2008, increasing to 158 million metric tons by 2016.²⁰ The return of mining has reset the heritage clock, shifting the focus of government and business interests to production in old-economy terms. The revival of mining has delayed a serious consideration of a postindustrial economic restructuring, and this has adversely affected a consideration of heritage and heritage tourism as one part of the overall response to industrial decline.

Furthermore, the sheer volume of trade and the large financial rewards involved with the coal export trade meant that key heritage sites along the Newcastle harbor front came to be valued for their potential future economic value only. In this environment, heritage was a mere hurdle in the overwhelming push for development. Such sites included the former BHP site that became the target of a least one major coal entrepreneur during this period as a site for a new coal loader. Therefore, the return of mining placed significant pressure on heritage sites. In the context of competition over sites in which government and independent enquiries have found high levels of corruption, industrial heritage took a backseat to powerful political and economic forces that were riding the wave of the commodity boom.²¹

¹⁹ Hunter Valley Research Foundation, *Diversification of the Hunter Economy Post-BHP* (Maryville: Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2011), 5–12.

²⁰ Newcastle Port Corporation, *Annual Report 2007–08* (Newcastle: Newcastle Port Corporation, 2008), 7, http://www.newportcorp.com.au/client_images/1366141.pdf; Newcastle Port Corporation, “Port of Newcastle’s non coal trade growth continues,” <http://www.portofnewcastle.com.au/News/Items/2016/Port-of-Newcastles-non-coal-trade-growth-continues.aspx>.

²¹ The major reports include: Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Operation Spicer Inquiry, <http://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/investigations/past-investigations/categorylist/12/203>; Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region, *The Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region: Final Report* (Sydney: The Committee, 2015), <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/5748/Final%20Report%20-%20The%20planning%20process%20in%20Newcastle%20a.pdf>.

The City of Newcastle's *Heritage Strategy 2013–2017* is a sophisticated and detailed document that covers the city's historical context, its strategic heritage priorities, and emerging issues, and offers recommendations.²² The term "industrial heritage," however, figures nowhere in this otherwise voluminous publication. Rather, it imagines that, "The City of Newcastle's heritage assets will be well managed and presented, reinforcing the city's attractiveness as a heritage tourism destination and strengthening its reputation as a smart, liveable and sustainable city." The vision of "well managed" heritage is hardly an inspirational one, however, the goal of harnessing heritage for "a smart, liveable and sustainable city" is a significant and laudable goal, but the recognition of the city's industrial past in achieving that objective is limited.²³

On the city's Visit Newcastle website industrial heritage has a very low profile. The entry point is "historical experiences," a phrase that puts an emphasis on the visitor's engagement with place, rather than on the place or the history itself. From here you can follow links to the "Convict and Industry Walking Tour" and the "Newcastle Maritime Museum." The "Convict and Industry Walking Tour" covers the convict sites of Newcastle, including the former convict lumberyard, the harbor, and the railway sites at the mouth of the Newcastle harbor. Using this resource it is actually very difficult to gain an understanding of the twentieth-century industrial development of Newcastle, with the exception of its preserved transport heritage infrastructure. Even Newcastle's era as a major colonial coal center in the mid- to late nineteenth century is largely absent.²⁴

The absence of any extensive tangible heritage of Newcastle's coal-mining era relates to the fact that the last of the Newcastle-area mines closed in the early 1900s. This was well before any heritage sensibility, and further these mines were located in areas that were subsequently subject to extensive suburban growth.²⁵ The pit headframe that loomed outside of the former Newcastle Museum site was actually transferred from an outer suburban mine (Burwood), but was recently removed

22 City of Newcastle, *Heritage Strategy 2013–2017* (Newcastle: City of Newcastle, 2014), 13, http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/getmedia/8dfbf07b-9eb1-4aab-913e-820ec7b41165/Heritage_Strategy_2013_2017.aspx.

23 Ibid., 13. There is good evidence that combining industrial heritage and sustainability can lead to positive outcomes. See Judith Alfrey and Tim Putnamhe, eds., *Industrial Heritage: Managing Resources and Uses* (London: Routledge, 1992); Landorf, "Framework for Sustainable Heritage Management," 494–510.

24 See the City of Newcastle website, Visit Newcastle, <http://www.visitnewcastle.com.au/>.

25 There are some rare and remarkable heritage sites from the early coal-mining period in Newcastle including the first convict coal mines, dating from 1801, and the Australian Agricultural Company House, dating 1849–50, but both sites have had checkered histories and are struggling to source funding for appropriate conservation and interpretation. See Erik Eklund, "In Search of the Lost Coal Mines of Newcastle," 2006, <https://downloads.newcastle.edu.au/library/cultural%20collections/pdf/lostcoalmines.pdf>; Ruth Cotton, "A Mine Manager's Retreat—the AA House," *Hidden Hamilton* (blog), December 8, 2013, <http://hiddenhamilton.blogspot.com.au/2013/12/a-mine-managers-retreat-aa-house.html>.

altogether. For a city whose urban makeup was shaped by coal mining, and now coal export, the absence of any headframe is a remarkable and significant omission.

Implications for Regional Identity

The AHD for Newcastle is self-consciously postindustrial. Beginning in the 1990s, city planners had positioned the city as a place with “a problem.” That problem was overwhelmingly its narrow economic base and its reliance on industry. The future was bound up with a new kind of urbanism based on lifestyle, beach and café culture, service industries, arts innovation, and a city-based postindustrial cosmopolitanism.²⁶

How residents have negotiated these economic shifts is much harder to discern. As Lucy Taksa has observed, industrial heritage has a political default toward a technological focus with little concern or resources left for a social history of the industrial workplace or its surrounding communities.²⁷ Yet clearly for workers, the loss of jobs over the period from 1976 through the 1999 end of steelmaking at BHP was a traumatic and difficult experience. A limited understanding of industrial heritage that fails to take into account their working lives and their experiences of the deindustrialization process would hardly be a welcome addition to the region’s cultural landscape.

Despite the centrality of the BHP Newcastle Steelworks (and the large nearby suburb of Mayfield) to the industrial heritage of the region, the entire site has been demolished. All of the structures were recorded and mapped before demolition. There were attempts to preserve just three significant buildings from the site, but these too were finally demolished in 2015 after an interim heritage protection order expired. The justifications for these demolitions included the alleged toxicity of the site and the need for the commercial reuse of the harbor front.²⁸ Remediation of industrial heritage sites is a significant issue for Newcastle and for the other case study regions, but it is a problem that other regions around the world have embraced and solved.²⁹

Two groups attempted to critique and modify the region’s AHD. One was a group of activists and sympathetic university academics who wished to acknowledge and preserve key aspects of the city’s industrial heritage. Another was a group of retired workers who through the Newcastle Industrial Heritage Association

²⁶ See especially Kevin Dun, Pauline McGuirk, and Hilary Winchester, “Place Making: The Social Construction of Newcastle,” *Geographical Research* 33, no. 2 (October 1995): 149–66; Mark Rofe, “From ‘Problem City’ to ‘Promise City’: Gentrification and the Revitalisation of Newcastle,” *Australian Geographical Studies* 42, no. 2 (July 2004): 193–206.

²⁷ Taksa, “Machines and Ghosts,” 65–70.

²⁸ “Former Newcastle Steelworks Buildings Spared from Wrecking Ball,” *ABC News*, September 29, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-30/former-newcastle-steelworks-buildings-spared-from-wrecking-ball-/5778096>. This 2014 reprieve for these buildings was only temporary and they were finally demolished in 2015.

²⁹ Dieter D. Genske, *Urban Land: Degradation, Investigation, Remediating* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2003).

attempted to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of the BHP Steelworks. Both groups have had limited success in the face of scarce resources, the power of the political and economic forces behind development, and a strong, almost reflexive, reaction in Newcastle to disown its industrial past.³⁰

Wollongong

Like the Newcastle region, Wollongong (or more accurately the “Illawarra” region of which Wollongong was the major center) possessed a coal-mining industry that required transport and engineering support. The coal mines in the region were not as large or as productive as the Newcastle mines, but they did develop into the second coalfield for New South Wales in the 1840s, displacing the local indigenous people, the Wodi Wodi. Pit-top villages were established to the north and south of Wollongong. Local coal proprietors and their parliamentary allies secured a railway line to Sydney, completed in 1889, which was an important piece of transport infrastructure. Local harbors were often exposed to the ocean swells, so further state investment in a deep-water harbor at Port Kembla, where construction began in 1900, was another crucial step forward. These political victories highlight the importance of regional elites creating their own regional economies through successful lobbying for state investment.³¹

Once the deep-water harbor at Port Kembla was established, industrial concentration focused on that site. Henceforth, the Illawarra enjoyed a coal resource and deep-water harbor much like Newcastle. The first major industry, a copper smelter and refinery, began production in 1908, and further industrial firms followed in 1918 and 1919. A regional NSW iron and steel producer relocated to Port Kembla in 1927, iron and steel production began in 1929, and this company was bought out by BHP in 1935. Vertical and horizontal integration followed with BHP owning or having a stake in local coal mines and in steel and metal fabrication plants that mushroomed around the steelworks.³²

Coal mining and industrial development encouraged population growth focusing on Port Kembla and also in nearby regional areas as well. As BHP and its subsidiaries in particular expanded, the Illawarra region, with Wollongong increasingly dominating, experienced large waves of new migrants. These workers became important elements of the regional labor market, picking up many of the dirtiest

³⁰ This section is drawn from my memories of and participation in Newcastle’s heritage issues during the period of 1994 to 2007, but see also the Newcastle Industrial Heritage Association website, <http://www.niha.org.au/index.php> and University of Newcastle Coal River Working Party annual reports, 2003 to 2007, <https://coalriver.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/2003-2007reports.pdf>.

³¹ Erik Eklund, *Steel Town: The Making and Breaking of Port Kembla* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 36–37; Henry Lee, “The Development of the Coal Trade in the Wollongong District of New South Wales, with Particular Reference to Government and Business, 1849–1889” (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 1993).

³² Rob Castle, “Steel City: the Economy, 1945–1995,” in *A History of Wollongong*, ed. Jim Hagan and Henry Lee (Wollongong: University of Wollongong Press, 2002), 71–80.

and hardest jobs in manufacturing. The suburbs of the region welcomed a new fund of cultural diversity. By 1956, postwar migrants made up 41 percent of the BHP Port Kembla workforce.³³

By 1957 the BHP steelworks at Port Kembla consisted of three blast furnaces (two of which were new), a new hot strip mill, and an iron-ore sintering plant. Construction of a new inner harbor began in 1956 (and was completed by 1960). An additional blast furnace was added in 1959. By that year, the size of the BHP steelworks' workforce at Port Kembla had grown to 22,884.³⁴

By the end of the 1970s, BHP Port Kembla employed 19,602 workers, almost one in five of the regional male workforce.³⁵ The dominance of heavy industry in the region also had a powerful effect on the female labor market, with very few jobs in manufacturing for women. In Wollongong, as in Newcastle and the Latrobe Valley, state governments attempted to attract textile industries in order to provide employment that was deemed more suitable for women workers. In the Wollongong area, a number of textile operations opened in Wollongong, Port Kembla, Bulli, and in nearby Unanderra. These appeared as early as the 1940s in response to a policy of decentralization and a growing recognition that women workers were a valuable and underutilized resource in areas with large population growth, such as the industrial regions.³⁶

By 1966, the region had a population of 171,000.³⁷ A polyglot mix of nationalities from Europe and, after 1978, increasingly from Asia formed a key part of the regional demographic and an important component of the industrial workforce. Large-scale job cuts began with the recession of the early 1980s. From 1981 to 1984, the size of the workforce at the Port Kembla steelworks declined from over nineteen thousand to just under thirteen thousand. The region's coal mines were also downsizing across the same period, with employment levels dropping from 5,720 in 1981 to 2,953 by 1991.³⁸ Unemployment levels reached 10 percent and youth unemployment was even higher throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

By 1995, the Port Kembla steelworks employed six thousand workers. Unlike Newcastle, however, the BHP strategy was not to halt steel production altogether. The large resource company embarked on a strategy of hiving off marginal or less productive businesses. In 2002, Bluescope Steel became a separate entity from

³³ Ibid., 72.

³⁴ "Port Kembla's Decade of Development," *BHP Review* 36, no. 6 (October 1959): 14–15; Eklund, *Steel Town*, 151–56.

³⁵ Mike Donaldson and T. Donaldson, "The Crisis in the Steel Industry," *Journal of Australian Political Economy* 14 (April 1983): 33–43, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1161&context=artspapers>.

³⁶ Louise Thom, "The Places Migrant Women Found Work in Wollongong, 1943–1990," Migration Heritage Project, Wollongong's Migration Heritage Thematic Study, http://www.mhpillawarra.com/docs/places_migrant-womens-work_essay.pdf. This essay is an important addition to my own published work on Port Kembla, which did not address women's textile and light manufacturing employment in the regional labor market. See Eklund, *Steel Town*, 156–58.

³⁷ *Commonwealth Year Book* (Canberra: Australian Government Printer, 1967), 175.

³⁸ Castle, "Steel City," 71–80.

BHP, bringing together its steel and manufacturing assets in Wollongong, New Zealand, and North America, but also moving many of its noncore functions to contractors.

Wollongong Image and Branding

The Visit Wollongong website gives insight into how the region is presented to potential tourists. Under the heading “heritage,” it presents the origins of Wollongong’s steel industry in very positive terms and acknowledges steel as “a catalyst for growth for many decades, . . . [which] . . . laid the foundations for the city’s economy, lifestyle and culture.”³⁹ The newly developed Wollongong Heritage Trail includes coal-mining museums in Mount Kembla and Bulli as well as the Illawarra Light Railway Museum, which includes “a range of items from Australia’s industrial railways.”⁴⁰ Wollongong demonstrates greater recognition of its coal-mining heritage than Newcastle even though it was a smaller regional producer. The reason relates to timing: the Newcastle mines all closed by 1901, while the Wollongong mines closed in the 1980s and 1990s. However, unlike similar coal- and steel-producing regions in Wales, Germany, and Poland, no extensive mine or industrial infrastructure has been conserved and interpreted. This is true of all three of the regions discussed here; there is no conserved and interpreted nationally significant industrial site in any of these three crucial industrial regions.

Although there is acknowledgement of industrial heritage in Wollongong, and indeed some representation of the region’s industrial heritage, its heavy industry and manufacturing are not present in the Museum Trail. Granted, one can view the major remaining industries from the Hill 60 Military Lookout (which is on the trail), but herein lies the essential problem for Wollongong and, in fact, for all of these Australian sites. The industries have not yet closed. There was an attempt to create a “Port Kembla Industry Park,” which would have included a series of viewing platforms in and around the industrial area of Port Kembla, but it is not possible (or at least it would be very difficult) to make a heritage site from an area that is still in use. One of the first major industries in Port Kembla, the copper smelter and refinery opened in 1908 and closed in 2003, with its iconic two hundred-meter stack dating back to 1965, was demolished in 2014. This site is currently managed by the NSW EPA with no plans for any major industrial heritage conservation or interpretation.

Implications for Regional Identity

Wollongong has changed dramatically since 1980 when the BHP steelworks and the regional coal mines dominated the male labor market. In this era, a job in one of

39 Wollongong City Council website, “History & Demographics,” December 23, 2016, <http://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/city/demographics/pages/default.aspx>.

40 See the brochure “Wollongong Museum Trail,” <http://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/city/demographics/Documents/Wollongong%20Museum%20Trail.pdf>.

these two industries was the expected future for many young men. Progression through school into apprenticeships with industrial and mining occupations was common. The rapid changes in the labor market entailed a shift in regional identities. The University of Wollongong grew rapidly from the middle of the 1980s, and the service sector, especially health, welfare, and retail, became far more significant. Wollongong's proximity to Sydney meant that the former coal-mining villages in the northern part of the region (Stanwell Park, Coalcliff, and Wombarra) became increasingly sought after in the property market, causing house prices in those areas to increase. A swift gentrification of the northern suburbs followed, as former working-class residents retired, moved on, or sold out.

As Wollongong looked to remake its image in the postindustrial age, new labels and themes became apparent in regional marketing and branding. The major development was the "Leisure Coast" label in 1987, an attempt to create a more positive image after six years of recession and retrenchments. The "Leisure Coast" must have been a bitter label to contemplate for those who had lost their jobs through economic restructuring.

Scholars Leonie Pearson and Kevin Dunn argue that the formulation of a new regional identity, a top-down process carried out through the tourism board, the local council, and the Chamber of Commerce, "is only a partial representation of the community."⁴¹ This new emphasis led to projects such as apartment development, new stadiums and music venues, bike paths, and the redevelopment of the Wollongong harbor from a working harbor into a leisure zone. Harbor and seaside locations in particular were subject to major redevelopment projects. Much like Newcastle, these were high stakes, lucrative projects where property prices were very high and any barriers, including heritage concerns, were minimized or avoided altogether. There were planning and corruption inquiries conducted in Wollongong with developers and council members as central players. As with Newcastle, the heady mix of valuable coastal locations and high-stakes planning contracts meant that heritage was often seen as, at best, a low priority and, at worst, an annoying barrier to development.⁴²

Retired workers, trade unions, and local heritage groups maintain a dissenting set of views. This diverse grouping sees the industrial age as one that deserves greater recognition in both the tangible and intangible heritage of Wollongong.

⁴¹ Leonie Pearson and Kevin Dunn, "Reidentifying Wollongong: Dispossession of the local citizenry," *CAUTHE 1999: Delighting the Senses; Proceedings from the Ninth Australian Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference* (Canberra: Bureau of Tourism Research, 1999), 264–69, <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=061584526023227;res=IELBUS>.

⁴² For the relevant independent enquiry into corruption at Wollongong Council see ICAC, "Wollongong City Council—Allegations of Corrupt Conduct in Relation to Development Applications, Approvals and Other Matters (Operation Atlas)," <https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/investigations/past-investigations/investigationdetail/65>. There were exceptions, including the sensitive and successful adaptive reuse of the Wollongong bathers' pavilion. See Wollongong City Council website, "Bathers Pavilion," February 26, 2014, <http://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/services/majorprojects/Pages/BathersPavilion.aspx>.

Well-known local union official Andy Gillespie best exemplified their views when he noted, “BHP helped developed this area into what it is today, despite whether you love or hate BHP that’s actually what happened.”⁴³ Despite this view, there are no substantial conserved and interpreted remnants from the region’s twentieth-century industrial age. One of the most startling vistas in the region is the view of the steelworks from the nearby suburb of Cringila. This entire area is an integrated heritage landscape and may well qualify as a significant industrial site, integrating industrial infrastructure with community and housing stock.

Latrobe Valley

The Latrobe Valley is a distinct geographical region that lies 150 kilometers east of Melbourne. The valley is bordered by mountain ranges to the north (the Baw Baw ranges) and the south (the Strzelecki and Jerralang ranges). From the late 1830s, the central part of the valley became the focus of pastoral expansion, as squatters moved into the district, displacing and dispossessing the indigenous people of the region, the Gunnai-Kurnai people.⁴⁴

The Latrobe Valley is a case of state-sponsored industrial development. The region was rich in natural resources, especially timber, coal, and some gold, but the Victorian state government decided to utilize brown coal deposits and establish a state-owned mining and electricity-generation hub, triggering major industrialization in the early 1920s. The State Electricity Commission (SEC) was both an employer and also a major player in regional urban development. The town of Yallourn, for example, was a purpose-built community modeled on garden-city principles. It was specifically built for SEC employees and opened in 1921. The SEC-sponsored subdivisions in nearby Yallourn North and Newborough built hostels for short-term accommodation.⁴⁵ This development was followed by later innovation such as the new town of Churchill, opened in 1966 and nearby the planned new Hazelwood power station, which the SEC designed for workers and their families.

By the 1950s the Latrobe Valley, the central axis of the Gippsland region, with the advantages of major brown coal deposits and after 1878 a rail connection to Melbourne, was the focus of postwar growth. In 1954, the town of Moe had a population of 8,770, Traralgon, 10,033, and Morwell, 13,033. These towns were major sites of urban growth and eclipsed older rural towns. There were steady flows of migrants from the United Kingdom and Ireland flocking to the new mines and

43 Cited in Nick McLaren, “BHP Cuts Ties with Former Heartland in the Illawarra, Ending Their 80-year Connection,” *ABC News*, May 31, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-30/bhp-cuts-ties-with-former-heartland-in-the-illawarra/6507570>.

44 Lyndall Ryan, “Settler Massacres on the Port Phillip Frontier, 1836–1851,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, 34, no. 3 (September 2010): 257–73; Peter Gardner, *Gippsland Massacres: The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribes, 1800–1860*, 3rd ed. (Ensay, Victoria: Ngarak Press, 2001).

45 Meredith Fletcher, *Digging Up People for Coal: A History of Yallourn* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 159.

power stations. As the decade progressed, more migrant families arrived from Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Yugoslavia, and other European countries.⁴⁶

Forestry was also an important industry for the region, and in 1939, Australian Paper Mills (APM) opened the Maryvale paper mill on the outskirts of Traralgon. Large-scale coal mining and electricity generation brought associated industries to the valley, including the briquetting industry and engineering works.

In the Latrobe Valley, the timing of deindustrialization was significantly different from the other regions under study. The 1970s was actually a decade of industrial consolidation, as the state-owned electricity enterprise invested in new power stations and urban growth. The new Hazelwood Power Station was officially opened to much fanfare in 1971. Moe and Morwell maintained their populations over this decade, while Traralgon grew strongly. By 1981, the SEC was well advanced in planning another major open-cut mine and power station at Loy Yang. Loy Yang A power station began operation in 1984, and Loy Yang B started in 1993.⁴⁷ As a consequence of this later timing, when deindustrialization came to the valley, it had its origins in a different set of economic and ideological concerns than in Newcastle and Wollongong.

As a neoliberal agenda gained increasing hold on Western political elites in the mid-1970s, governments were seen as inherently less efficient than private enterprise. The postwar consensus around a mixed-market economy with broadly accepted state and private spheres of responsibility began to break down, though not without considerable political and industrial unrest.⁴⁸ By 1989–90, the SEC employed 8,481 employees, but through a process of privatization and asset sales, the workforce had declined to less than half of that number by 1994–95.⁴⁹ This traumatic wave of job losses was also accompanied by local government reorganization (the most extensive since the first shires were established in 1878) and the withdrawal of services. Local academics Jenny Cameron and Katherine Gibson suggest that by the 1990s the region was characterized by “an overarching sense of despair” through high unemployment and the loss of the security, certainty, and good wages that came with the SEC.⁵⁰ Since the early 1990s, all of the mining, electricity generation, administration, maintenance, and specialist engineering services have been privatized and split into separate businesses with a large contractor

46 Erik Eklund and Julie Fenley, “Introduction: Towards a New Environmental History of Gippsland,” in *Earth and Industry: Stories from Gippsland*, ed. Erik Eklund and Julie Fenley (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015), 1–15.

47 David Langmore, *Planning Power: The Uses and Abuses of Power in the Planning of the Latrobe Valley* (Melbourne: Arcadia Press, 2013).

48 See, for example, Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Rachel S. Turner, *Neoliberal Ideology: History, Concepts and Policies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

49 J. Cameron, and K. Gibson, “Alternative Pathways to Community and Economic Development: The Latrobe Valley Community Partnering Project,” *Geographical Research* 43, no. 3 (September 2005): 274.

50 *Ibid.*, 274.

workforce. The sense of one large common enterprise working for a state vision of development has now completely disappeared. By April 2017, the unemployment rate in the Latrobe-Gippsland region (which includes the Latrobe Valley and surrounding local government areas) was 7.4 percent, above the state average of 6.1 percent.⁵¹

Latrobe Valley Image and Branding

The official “Visit Latrobe City” website has sections on “The Arts,” and “Museums,” and one entire section on the historic gold-mining town of “Walhalla” (which is in fact in the nearby Baw Baw Shire), but it does not foreground industrial heritage or even heritage as such. All of these sections include references to heritage, but the theme is muted. In particular, “industrial heritage” as a distinct theme is difficult to isolate separately from other themes, such as rural settlement, multiculturalism, and town development. This is somewhat at odds with the Latrobe City Council’s *Heritage Strategy*, which does specifically mention “industrial heritage,” and has as one of its major recommendations to seek assistance from the Victorian state government to assess the heritage significance of the electricity industry. Furthermore, the city’s branding tagline, “Latrobe City: A New Energy,” and its waveform logo specifically call upon the region’s industrial past and evoke a (hopefully) thriving future.⁵² Finally, four of the eight sites in the area on the Victorian State Heritage Register are industrial heritage sites, including the No. 21 Bucket Dredger at Morwell, the Traralgon Engine Shed and Turntable, the former Yallourn Power Station Administrative Building, and the Staplegrove Meat Woks at Flynn.⁵³

Part of the reason for the seemingly low profile for industrial heritage is that the region’s major identifying symbols for outsiders are very negative images of the smoke stacks of Hazelwood power station, or less often the Loy Yang power stations.⁵⁴ In the context of uncertainty over the future of the power stations, the rising concerns over exposure to particulate matter from coal-fired power stations, and now especially the role of emissions as a greenhouse gas, the region’s industrial imagery is fraught to say the least. Even news stories not ostensibly about the Latrobe Valley but about climate change or industrial pollution feature images of

⁵¹ Australian Government Department of Employment website, “Unemployment Rate by Labour Force Region,” June 28, 2017, http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/LFR_SAFOUR/VIC_LFR_LM_byLFR_UnemploymentRate.

⁵² Latrobe City Council, “Meaning of the Logo,” http://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/About_Us/Media_and_Publications/Logo_use_request.

⁵³ Latrobe City Council, *Heritage Strategy* (Morwell: Latrobe City Council, 2014), 1–2, http://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/Building_and_Planning/Planning/Heritage.

⁵⁴ See a 2012 survey of three hundred Victorians from outside of the Latrobe Valley. Where they did have knowledge of the valley, their strongest associations were with electricity generation, mining, and pollution. Rod Ellis-Jones, “Latrobe City Omnibus Survey Report,” August 15, 2012, <http://www.ellisjones.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ellis-jones-latrobe-omnibus-survey-report-260712.pdf>.

or references to Latrobe Valley power stations.⁵⁵ The more chronologically distant and less politically complex industrial imagery of an old dairy factory or a coal-mining headframe is a far safer option as far as tourism icons go. Latrobe City is also a smaller local government area with fewer resources than either Wollongong or Newcastle. Its *Heritage Strategy* is not as elaborate, and its capacity to identify, conserve, and interpret sites is much more limited compared to the two NSW regional cities.

Implications for Regional Identity

Industrial heritage has a presence within the AHD of the Latrobe Valley, albeit a modest one. There are industrial heritage sites, listed above, that are protected on the Victorian State Heritage Register, and the city's *Heritage Strategy*, logo, and tagline acknowledges industrial heritage. Unlike Newcastle or Wollongong, a highly contested harbor or seaside zone for new development is absent in this inland regional area. Moreover, the Latrobe Valley has not seen the waves of property and commercial development characteristic of Newcastle and Wollongong. This has meant that the development versus heritage paradigm is not as relevant in this region. Yet the shock of privatization and breakup of the SEC in the 1990s as well as the growing uncertainty over the future of the major mining and electricity enterprises has overshadowed a concerted focus on industrial heritage.

The original environmental movement campaign to shut down the Hazelwood Power Station (which was a large contributor to Victoria's greenhouse gas and regional particulate emissions) was simply "Close Hazelwood." This was a call for an abrupt termination of the industrial age based on the science of climate change and the health effects of particulate exposure. In this context, it is politically and culturally difficult to conserve and interpret the contribution of the industry to making the valley what it is today. The campaign to close Hazelwood was subsequently amended to "Replace Hazelwood" in an attempt to emphasize transitioning the power-station workforce to new employment in rehabilitation and clean energy.⁵⁶

In a region that has felt the full effects of a neoliberal privatization agenda and the breakup of old shire councils, there remains a highly disaggregated and uncertain civil society that has its eye on the uncertain future, rather than on a celebration of an industrial past. In November 2016, as this article was being completed, the

⁵⁵ See, for example, "Australia's Climate Change Authority Says Scientific Predictions Have Led It to Revise up the Recommended Carbon Emissions Reduction Target," published by ABC News, which features a photo of Hazelwood, and the *Australian Financial Review's* story by Ben Potter and Mark Ludow, "Climate Change Authority Backs Emissions Trading Scheme" that has a photo of Loy Yang B, though it is not identified. *ABC News*, February 26, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-27/smoke-rises-from-hazelwood-power-station-in-la-trobe-valley2c-/5288960>; *Australian Financial Review*, August 31, 2016, <http://www.afr.com/business/energy/climate-change-authority-backs-emissions-trading-scheme-20160831-gr5hsu>.

⁵⁶ See Australian Greens Victoria website, "Beyond Coal," <http://www.replacehazelwood.com.au/>.

French-based owners of the Hazelwood Power Station and open-cut mine, Engie, announced plans to close the station and mine by late March 2017. The job losses and plans for new regional development opportunities have understandably been a political and community focus during this period.⁵⁷

As in Newcastle and Wollongong, groups of retired workers, nonprofit associations, and volunteers do what they can to preserve the twentieth-century history of the valley in small museums, such as Old Brown Coal Mine Museum in Yallourn North and the volunteer-run PowerWorks Visitor Centre.⁵⁸ The move from production to shutting down and remediation is, however, igniting a discussion about adaptive reuse and conservation not just at Hazelwood but also at the nearby Morwell power station and briquette factory, which closed in 2014. As of May 2017, the Morwell facility is under consideration for listing on the State Heritage Register after being threatened with demolition. Despite the focus on the Hazelwood closure and job losses, there may still be a chance to bring a more concerted focus on industrial heritage to the valley at this crucial moment of economic transition.

Conclusion

All of the three Australian regions surveyed in this article have a low or limited profile for industrial heritage within their AHD. Given the central role that industrialization played in helping to underpin their regional economies and forge their respective societies this is a surprising absence. None of the sites surveyed here include a major industrial heritage attraction. Instead, where there has been good progress, it has been the result of piecemeal efforts often relying on the goodwill of volunteers. The absence of an integrated industrial heritage stands out in all three regions.

In Newcastle, the early decline of the coal mines in the immediate vicinity of the city has meant that there is little surviving material fabric from this era. But the industrial age at Newcastle has left a vast array of material remains, including gas works, harbor and railway infrastructure, factories, and fine commercial buildings. Some of this has been preserved and interpreted, but for the most part, the industrial age at Newcastle is not written into the formal AHD of the city. In fact, one of the largest and most important industrial heritage sites in Australia, the BHP

⁵⁷ Gay Alcorn, "Gloom in the Valley as Hazelwood Fades to Black," *Guardian*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/mar/28/gloom-in-the-valley-as-hazelwood-fades-to-black>; Erik Eklund, "Hazelwood Power Station: From Modernist Icon to Greenhouse Pariah," *Conversation*, March 30, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/hazelwood-power-station-from-modernist-icon-to-greenhouse-pariah-75217>.

⁵⁸ See the Old Brown Coal Mine Museum's website: <http://www.browncoalminemuseum.websyte.com.au/>. The museum is run by volunteers from the Yallourn North and District Historical Society. The former SEC visitor center at PowerWorks, Morwell, has been taken up by a community-based not-for-profit group who keep the center open and the displays accessible through volunteer labor. See PowerWorks website, "About Us," <http://www.powerworks.net.au/about-us/>.

Newcastle steelworks, has been completely demolished. Even the vain attempt to salvage three modest but nonetheless significant structures on-site was unsuccessful. The entire site, as we have noted, was razed and flattened. Therefore, the simple survival of heritage fabric from an earlier era is no guarantee that it is likely to be protected in a postindustrial age, despite the presence of state-based heritage legislation.

In the case of Wollongong, coal mining persisted until a major downturn in the 1980s and 1990s. This means there are still material remains and a number of museum assets that can interpret the coal-mining era, which was so important to triggering industrial development and shaping the urban structure of the region. A new branding effort from 1987 (the “Leisure Coast”) left very little room for the industrial age, and postindustrial themes have been very apparent. Yet the *Heritage Strategy* and the Visit Wollongong website do acknowledge the importance of Wollongong’s industrial and mining heritage.

In the Latrobe Valley, industrial heritage has a modest profile and some acknowledgement. The region includes large industrial heritage sites on the Victorian State Register. Yet the difficult privatization of the 1990s and the uncertainty over the future of the still operating coal mines and power stations make it very difficult for an unfettered celebration of the industrial age. Neoliberalism has had a powerful effect on a community that is disaggregated into smaller workforce groups and focused on an uncertain transition that the region faces through the next decade. The very immediacy of the current closure of Hazelwood and the possible demolition of the Morwell power station, however, may open up possibilities for a renewed industrial heritage strategy. The absence of highly contested coastal and riverfront sites may also play in the region’s favor.

Despite the diversity identified, all three regions still have mining and industrial production. Unlike some regions where entire factory precincts have closed and most if not all mining and industry has concluded, this is not the case with these three regions. In Newcastle’s case, although the steelworks ceased production in 1999, there has been a dramatic return of coal mining after the 2001 commodities boom, once again making Newcastle one of the largest coaling ports in the world. Wollongong still has a functioning steelworks, but at much reduced capacity, as well as a reduced coal-mining industry. The Latrobe Valley still provides almost 75 percent of Victoria’s power needs through its three main power stations, Loy Yang A, Loy Yang B, and International Power at Yallourn, as well as two remaining open-cut (or open-cast) brown coal mines at Yallourn and Loy Yang.

In the midst of ongoing concerns over economic restructuring and attempts to reframe the regions as postindustrial (especially in Newcastle and Wollongong), the industrial past is a largely untapped cultural resource. Whereas the overall Australian context sees a mixed picture for industrial heritage, these three regions do not display a strong recognition of their industrial heritage. Away from the high profile and highly contested commercial and residential zones on the NSW coastline, the

Latrobe Valley appears to be doing the most to acknowledge its industrial heritage in a fraught political and economic context, and despite scarce resources.

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