

## ***A National Australian Heritage Strategy – an overview***

- An effective national Heritage Strategy will require a shared understanding between governments, non government organizations and the public of what constitutes Australia's heritage and a set of policies and actions that will allow not only its preservation, but also recognize our heritage as a dynamic entity and plan for its future.
- The Strategy needs to be guided by a mission, a vision, clearly stated values and sound actions.
- The strategy needs to recognize the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current programs and mechanisms we have in place throughout the country and provide insightful strategies for their enhancement and/or replacement.
- The Strategy must be forward looking, and while being directed at cultural, natural, tangible and intangible heritage, be conversant with future conservation concerns such as the effects of climate change, population increases, digital technology evolution and social change.
- The Strategy and its implementation into the future must have a strong and durable funding basis that is adhered to by successive governments.
- Most importantly, the Strategy must be a final product coming from well-informed input from government, non-government organizations and the public.
- The Australian Heritage Strategy therefore must be formed by the people (present) and for the people (present and future).

## ***Elements of the Australian Heritage Strategy***

- The objectives of the Strategy must always be consistent with: a) *the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* and b) *the Australia Natural Heritage Charter*. Both these Charters set standards of best practice for those who provide advice, make decisions about, or undertake works to places/collections of cultural (Indigenous and historic) and natural significance.
- There must be a rigorous approach through the legislative processes, Commonwealth and State, aimed at protecting and conserving the heritage values of places. This would include retaining Commonwealth decision making on referrals under the EPBC Act.
- Protection to be given to places formerly on the Register of the National Estate (RNE) but which have not been added to statutory registers.
- A body such as the present Australian Heritage Council should continue to provide advice to Ministers on heritage registrations and referrals under the EPBC Act. Advice from this body should be acted upon for the benefit of conserving heritage places and final decisions to be free from political or developmental influences.
- Provision of key positions within government bodies responsible for managing heritage and conservation matters who will be concerned with the implementation and efficacy of the strategy. These positions must be adequately staffed and resourced to ensure that best practice conservation management is continually provided.
- Consultation and/or liaison with key non-government heritage related organisations. These organisations have an enormous body of expertise and experience, which can be utilised by the Commonwealth. An example is nationally through National Trusts of Australia, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, and Australia ICOMOS. These organisations have a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on national heritage issues.
- Develop a process for the resolution of conflict resulting from concerns related to State/Commonwealth/ non-government management of heritage values.
- Develop a process of maintaining statutory heritage places registers making information on them accessible to management staff, researchers, those responsible for conservation as well as to the general public. Information now in hard-copy format from the Australian Heritage Data Base (former RNE) to be digitally accessible. Access should be hassle-free through a user-friendly web site.

- Support for best practice heritage conservation - such as auditing guidelines in conservation areas to see if they are working and implementing best practice measures if required. A process for monitoring, reviewing, reporting on the implementation of the Australian Heritage Strategy.
- Development of an outline of the existing use and management of properties owned by government agencies, private and NTs – determine whether the use of a property does not and will not conflict with the stated heritage values, staffing, open hours – adaptive reuse under the principles of the Burra Charter.
- Contribution to the international scene by providing support to other countries to develop or expand their heritage protection processes. Working with others in developing policies for disaster management of heritage places.
- Support for better understanding of sustainability and energy rating schemes as they apply to heritage and existing buildings so there is the best total outcome, which may require modification to existing schemes.
- Community engagement - support for engaging with children such as a wider use of social media to promote existing heritage. Engagement with the public through broad media means, for example the production of 'Building Australia' documentary for Fox TV 's History Channel.
- Development of programs or involvement in training in heritage conservation – Examples are: supporting tertiary institutions with degree courses in conservation management; supporting the advancement of heritage trades and professional skills training, staff training programs and/or opportunities for non-government managers of heritage listed properties; development of a national register of heritage trades and consultants.
- A time frame for review and revision of the Strategy. For example, a five-year plan followed by a review of the strategy's efficacy. Issues to identify and understanding would include how effective the registration process is; how climate change will impact on heritage places and how to mitigate against negative impacts; how population increase will impact on heritage places; and the promotion of heritage on a national level. (Some of these issues have been put to the Commonwealth Government in a recent ACNT submissions).

### **Heritage Funding**

An integral part of the Australian Heritage Strategy will be in funding processes. A committed, reliable, and continuing budget allocation process to the strategy and the heritage places free from political influence is required to support the Strategy.

Broad funding practices beneficial for government and non- government could include but not be restricted to:

- Tax incentives – Federal and State
- Private heritage agreements
- Cultural heritage trust funds
- Mortgage easements
- Revolving heritage funding
- Heritage care funding
- Resident curatorship agreements
- Federal and state partnership agreements
- Touring agreements
- Travel agent & operator agreements on a national level
- National heritage lottery program, similar to Lotterywest in Western Australia, which has supported heritage conservation.
- Untied funding to key non-government heritage groups to keep them viable and as a expert resource for governments to improve heritage outcomes and to work on local heritage projects that may not have national significance.
- Support and contribution to International organisations such as International National Trust Organisation (INTO) and Australia ICOMOS.