# Template FOR INPUT INTO THE

**AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY**

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| Overview  This template should be used to provide comments on the design of the Australian Heritage Strategy. | |
| Contact Details | |
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| **Date:** | **22 January 2014** |
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| Questions  Please add your comments for some or all of the three questions below. If you have other information you wish to provide, please add this in the other comments field. | |
| 1. What do you think are the key elements of the Commonwealth’s role in heritage? | |
| * Providing a nationally-recognised platform for honouring, accessing, promoting and preserving local heritage | |
| 2. What new cooperative models could be explored to open up opportunities for heritage protection? | |
| * Something akin to “Land for Wildlife” but targeting European and Indigenous heritage. Many private landholders are aware of heritage sites on their properties and are very keen to help preserve these places and items associated with these places. A system needs to be devised whereby these persons could be rewarded for being (and receive training for being) heritage site-custodians, and even brought together to form their own organisations. These landowners are often eager to funnel funds and lobbying power into heritage concerns, yet no mechanism currently exists to tap this potential. If these individuals were assisted in forming their own organisations working with federal government, a great deal more funds, lobbying power, and public mobilization would be achieved. * In my experience, many Indigenous groups lack sufficient manpower or finances to effectively patrol all sites in their regions but are very happy with the current level of protection given by landowners. This arrangement needs to be formalized, enabling the landowners to function as site-monitors, working directly and cooperatively with heritage and Indigenous bodies, without fear of having land resumed or “invaded” on that account. * Instead of threatening private landowners with hefty fines for heritage-destruction (which only seems to generate legal disputes and destruction-on-the-sly), federal heritage authorities should become active in promoting heritage sites on private property as something to celebrate – directly approaching, educating and enthusing landowners re/ the “treasures” on their land, and rewarding these landowners by offering incentives whereby they would feel encouraged/ duty-bound to better monitor and preserve their heritage places: e.g. some form of recognition/ status for their role, and helping devise possible means of income (e.g. paid tours at their discretion, or incentives for heritage reconstruction). * Federal bodies also need to work much more closely with LOCAL bodies. In my experience, federal “experts” are sent out to conduct assessments or implement strategies, with limited involvement of on-the-ground experts in the local communities – e.g. local history groups, local historians or heritage experts with a long interest in/ knowledge of the sites concerned. Thus a wealth of local knowledge (and even willing volunteer labour) is superseded. | |
| 3. How can communities engage more effectively in the management of heritage places? | |
| * By federal government bodies either regularly sending out professionals, or utilizing local professionals, to more fully assess the significance of items or places maintained by local groups, and giving these professionals sufficient authority that they could enact measures to “earmark” and improve the preservation/ promotion/ study of these items/ places. To date, heritage bodies tend to run courses whereby local groups are “skilled up” in heritage matters, but in my experience, only a few local bodies attend, and most cannot rapidly acquire the level of knowledge for them to identify items or places of possible national or regional significance. * By offering or helping fund courses or sessions that will help educate communities as to what is distinctive (“point of difference”) in their local heritage. Often local volunteer bodies have very limited understanding of what is distinctive or unique in their local heritage, and for this reason do not value it. This may mean calling on local historians or experts in specific fields to generate a groundswell of public understanding. * There is often a disconnection between families (both non-Indigenous and Indigenous) with a long history/ knowledge of specific areas, and federal heritage bodies. Measures need to be devised to better utilize/ attract these families into sharing their knowledge, regardless of which families or Native Title bodies are currently most prominent * By having sufficient funding to monitor heritage sites – e.g. Indigenous sites | |
| Other comments | |
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