# Template FOR INPUT INTO THE

**AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Overview  This template should be used to provide comments on the design of the Australian Heritage Strategy. | |
| Contact Details | |
| **Name of Organisation:** | **Engineers Australia,**  Through its peak heritage body **Engineering Heritage Australia** |
| **Name of Author:** | **Keith Baker** |
| **Date:** | **24 January 2014** |
|  | |
| 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? | |
| The role of the Commonwealth should be to   * Provide leadership and consistency in heritage policy * Promote awareness and understanding of Australia’s national heritage. * Provide for the protection and conservation of Australia’s national heritage with respect to items in both Commonwealth and private ownership. Promote the concept of “custodianship” versus “ownership”. * Actively develop and maintain a register of places and movable objects of national significance to Australia. Encourage members of the public to nominate (with evidence of significance) places and objects. * Ensure all Commonwealth instrumentalities maintain heritage registers and are bound by, and observe Commonwealth heritage law. * Ensure that all heritage protection documents refer also to objects of heritage significance and knowledge of all forms (movable heritage, archives, oral history, photographs)recognising that heritage is not just about places. * Protect and conserve places and movable objects of national significance to Australia. * Work co-operatively with the States and Territories and acknowledge that places and movable objects owned by the Commonwealth may be of State significance and that they may be placed on State heritage registers. * Make provision for an application to be required in respect of any action that may damage, destroy or modify a structure, place or object, or to export a movable object that is on the Commonwealth register, and that such applications will be determined in accordance with their impact on the heritage values of the item and in accordance with the national interest. * Provide adequate resources to the Commonwealth Department responsible for Movable Cultural Heritage to implement the plan produced in 2010 but not yet fully implemented. Conduct regular reviews of Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage (last in 2009) to respond to community calls for increased levels of protection. * Relieve the burden of prohibitive insurance policies for organisations wishing to display heritage places and objects (particularly objects of machinery in working condition). * Encourage the development of national standards for the operation of heritage machinery acknowledging that heritage machines can be operated safely without complying absolutely with current OH&S standards (as has been proved in UK, USA and NZ) * Provide taxation concessions to individuals and organisations who conserve significant heritage items as custodians for future generations (similar to Canadian practice) * Extend the “Green Army” concept to heritage projects (providing experience in trades, project management, heritage appreciation, interpretation of collections etc.) | |
| 2. What new cooperative models could be explored to open up opportunities for heritage protection? | |
| Opportunities could be opened up by the Australian Heritage Strategy   * Facilitating a consultative forum to provide continuing advice to Government * Acknowledging and supporting community groups which are custodians of the majority of Australia’s movable cultural heritage * Including stronger recognition of Australia’s achievements, particularly engineering achievements in the school curriculum. The latter aspect could be linked to encouragement of students to study sciences and become future engineers and scientists with an appreciation of their past. | |
| 3. How can communities engage more effectively in the management of heritage places? | |
| Effective community engagement could be facilitated by the Strategy   * Acknowledging the role of “amateur” community groups (museums, clubs, historical societies, etc.) which care for much of Australia’s engineering (particularly movable heritage). * Promoting heritage tourism and the value of heritage in the school curriculum so that local communities are proud of their heritage and seek to conserve it. * Facilitating training to community groups in the conservation of places, objects and the retention of the knowledge and records of their heritage. | |
| Other comments | |
| Some of the points made above are explained further in the accompanying letter to the Minister.  Also Engineering Heritage Australia made a submission in 2012 as part of the previous Government’s consultation on a National Heritage Strategy. While some of the points made received passing acknowledgement in the summary that was subsequently published, the situation is substantially unchanged and a copy of our previous submission is appended to provide further background and information. | |

Appendix 1

**2012 EHA** **SUBMISSION ON AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY**

This submission is made on behalf of Engineering Heritage Australia, the heritage arm of Engineers Australia. We wish to make four key points:

1. Heritage is not homogeneous and engineering works need to be identified and recognised as an important component of Australia’s heritage.

2. Engineering Heritage Australia supports mainstream heritage conservation and actively participates in mainstream processes while recognising that such processes are at times narrowly defined.

3. There are many reasons for conserving and enjoying engineering heritage and groups who presently do not necessarily identify with mainstream heritage should be encouraged and not sidelined.

4. Engineers have needed skills which should be more widely used in heritage conservation.

**Heritage is not homogeneous**

There are stereotypical ideas in the wider community that heritage relates to very old quaint buildings and such people have difficulty recognising the breadth of places, works and objects that are valuable for our understanding of the present and should preserved for the benefit of future generations. Engineering and industrial heritage is a vital part of our national estate and while recognised, is under represented. Works of engineering heritage significance cover not only dams and bridges; but machinery and industrial processes, building structures, engineering services, communications, computing and space exploration; as well as mining sites which need to be managed in conjunction with our natural heritage; and inventive Aboriginal works such as fish traps which also form part of our indigenous cultural heritage.

*Recommendation*: Engineering works need to be identified and recognised as an important component of Australia’s heritage

**Engineering Heritage Australia supports mainstream heritage conservation**

Engineering Heritage Australia embraces the Burra Charter and works actively with Australia ICOMOS, National Trusts and Commonwealth and State Heritage Agencies. Until it was disbanded we were an active and long term member of the National Cultural Heritage Forum which met with and provided advice to a succession of heritage Ministers. We are active in recognising and interpreting significant engineering works, acknowledging engineering heritage achievement and recording the oral history of eminent engineers. We have run 16 biennial Engineering Heritage conferences. See http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/engineering-heritage-australia for more information.

But while we are part of the mainstream heritage movement we have a heightened focus on technical achievement, for which an understanding of the principles and the processes adopted can be as significant as the remaining physical evidence. We therefore support the interpretation of heritage by active conservation of moving machinery and plant as well as static conservation where that is more appropriate. The significance of a machine is often enhanced by continuing use. Hence the application of conservation principles can be different where continued use and demonstration to the public of machinery demands public safety and may require alterations and modifications or replication of parts rather than strictly holding to the primacy of original fabric. In such situations the operation and safety aspects provide a different emphasis to conservation requirements. The Abt Wilderness Railway in Tasmania is a prime example of this approach, where the Burra Charter does not presently adequately cover moving heritage and consideration should be given to making it broader and including a Movable Heritage Guideline. We consider that other charters such as the TICCIH Charter for the Industrial Heritage can also provide guidance.

We are also concerned at the amount of historic machinery being allowed to be exported from Australia for sale without adequate heritage assessment and protection.

*Recommendation*: There is scope for a broader and more embracing approach to heritage processes that covers objects in their own right where they are not associated with a particular place or included in conventional museum collections.

Further there is need for greater resourcing of the Government agency managing permits for the export of historic machinery to draw on expertise in the community which does not have a financial interest to provide greater protection for our movable heritage.

**There are many reasons for conserving and enjoying engineering heritage**

A wide range of voluntary and semi-commercial groups conserve machinery and equipment for the joy they receive in working with historic machinery, seeing it come to life again, and sharing that enjoyment with others in the community. Such groups include steam preservation societies, aircraft museums, vintage car clubs, heritage fleet and maritime heritage groups as well as rural museums collecting farm machinery. Some of these groups would be oblivious to Burra Charter principles and may have their own norms and guidelines. But along with Engineering Heritage Australia they would recognise that engineering heritage matters and they are prepared to commit many hours to its survival and prospering. With the sheer number of volunteers in the community actively involved in some form of moveable heritage conservation their labour has an economic value which is not quantified or taken into account. Reused machinery can also have economic value in its own right, apart from the embodied energy which should not be wasted.

Engineering works that are recognised as having heritage value may still be in use, like the Snowy Mountains Scheme, or capable of economic reuse like the Lake Margaret Power Scheme. Many are tourist attractions like the Sydney Heritage Fleet and the Tasmanian West Coast Wilderness Railway, while at the same time they are assisting public understanding of technology. For most of the people involved there is a strong element of having fun while encouraging interest and providing training for future engineers, technologists and tradespeople. For present engineers the knowledge of the past can inspire creativity while avoiding reinventing the wheel, sometimes suggesting appropriate technology to be applied in different circumstances. The achievements and short comings of the past can also help us to understand who we are, such as when we experience a change of rail gauge at a state border. But for the most part we can take some pride in the evidence of past engineering achievements for the use and benefit of mankind.

*Recommendation*: All aspects of cultural heritage should be brought within the coverage of the Australian Heritage Strategy by recognising the contribution made by diverse groups.

**Engineers have needed skills which should be more widely used in heritage conservation**

Heritage conservation is a multi-disciplinary undertaking involving suitably qualified and experienced professionals, tradespeople and those with traditional craft skills. Engineers with appropriate training have much to offer in the conservation of buildings including their structure and services as well as in the conservation of specific engineering works. Too often such work is undertaken by people with insufficient understanding of the technology involved. A separate submission from our Tasmanian Division will elaborate on this aspect.

Engineers Australia now recognises a specialist field of Heritage and Conservation Engineering and accredits those who meet the required standard through training and experience beyond their basic qualification in a branch of engineering. We consider as more clients and project managers recognise the need for engineering expertise in conservation projects, more engineers will specialise in heritage work and provide more assured solutions in overcoming deterioration in a safe and effective way. For more information see http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/nerb/heritage-and-conservation-engineering. Engineering Heritage Australia is encouraging more engineers to become formally recognised as Heritage and Conservation Engineers, but this requires three elements: creation of greater awareness among the engineering profession; training in Burra Charter processes for those not already immersed in conservation projects; and recognition by Commonwealth and State heritage agencies of the specialisation by requiring or giving preference to certified practising Heritage and Conservation Engineers in tenders where there is a need for such involvement.

*Recommendation:* That more engineers should be encouraged to become registered as Heritage and Conservation Engineers and Commonwealth and State Heritage agencies should progressively require work of an engineering nature on conservation projects to be performed by accredited heritage engineers.

We would like to thank the Australian Heritage Strategy Project Team for the opportunity to contribute to the strategy and assure you of our continuing support and offer assistance with further development of the strategy.

Keith Baker

Deputy Chair

Engineering Heritage Australia