# Template FOR INPUT INTO THE

**AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY**

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| Overview  This template should be used to provide comments on the content of the Australian Heritage Strategy. | |
| Contact Details | |
| **Name of Organisation:** | Natural Allies |
| **Name of Author:** | **Hylda Rolfe, Principal** |
| **Date:** | **7 May 2014** |
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| Questions  Please add your comments for some or all of the questions provided with the Strategy’s three high level themes below. If you have other information you wish to provide, please add this in the “Other comments” field. | |
| 1. **Improve National Leadership**   What are the most important things the Australian Government should be doing to offer leadership in heritage?  How can the Australian Government provide guidance and support for our national heritage—while still empowering other government, industry and community members to take responsibility and get involved?  What priority areas are important to you, your organisation or group?  What practical actions would you suggest to improve national heritage leadership? | |
| Ensure that interactions with the full context – the hinterland – of heritage areas is understood and considered in developing approaches to *protection* of heritage areas, so that protection may be comprehensive and reliable regardless of jurisdictional issues. | |
| 1. **Pursue Innovative Partnerships**   What partnerships are most needed within the heritage sector?  What heritage roles and responsibilities should be led by governments, peak heritage organisations or community groups in the 21st century?  How should resources be shared through heritage partnerships to ensure the greatest return on agreed priorities?  Can you provide examples of successful innovative partnerships you or your organisation have established? | |
| *Natural Allies* urges caution in the development of partnerships of the kinds envisaged, to protect heritage places and items from commercially-oriented transformation. ‘Adaptive re-use’ seems often to be a synonym for commercial exploitation without respect for or protection of the heritage values that are inherent in the place/item. | |
| 1. **Enable encourage communities to understand and care for their heritage**   What should the Australian heritage sector be doing to help the Australian community better engage in heritage activities?  How can a shared understanding of our national heritage be developed and best celebrated together?  Do you have any examples of activities that have been successful in promoting local heritage to a broader audience?  What is the role of technology and new media in providing greater community access to heritage? | |
| Analysis of the interaction of community and commercial activities with the heritage values of places and items is an essential pre-condition for the development of proper and comprehensive measures to protect those heritage values. | |
| **Other comments** | |
| ***Natural Allies***  Environmental advocates and consultants  ***A Strategy for Australia’s Heritage: Consultation draft, April 2014 - Comment***  Our comment primarily reflects our concerns about issues of *protection* of Australia’s natural and cultural heritage that have arisen in the course of our work.  Put briefly, it seems that on occasion the protection of a place extends to – but not beyond – its nominated *boundary*, and relates to stipulated matters. *For example*, the *Great Barrier Reef* is thought by many and generally understood to be protected, but the recent difficulties and dissension relating to the proposed deposition and management of materials from adjacent dredging activity indicate that serious adverse implications for the near Reef area do not obviously have priority and prominence in assessments of such works. We recognise that jurisdiction issues contribute to the complications, but we think the general public attitude towards the Reef does not use that as a reference point; those who value the Reef simply want it protected, properly and thoroughly.  A similar boundary-related issue arises in the *NSW Blue Mountains* heritage area, where repeated and catastrophic fire events have met with responses ranging from ‘fire-reduction preventive burn-off’ to rebuilding and/or removal of property structures, but without apparent global consideration of the incremental effects of urban settlements on the heritage values of the area.  The draft Strategy offers little comfort on that score, unless it is implicit in the policy and process alignment elements of para 2(a). But much of the ‘one-stop’ enthusiasm fuelling such aspirations tends towards removal of duplication in process rather than ensuring that protection mechanisms are comprehensive in coverage and effective in practice.  Some analogous difficulties seem inherent in the approach of the draft Strategy to tourist visitation and heritage sharing activity. The phrase *loved to death* is perhaps too often applicable to heavily promoted heritage places, reflecting as it does an over-bearing influence of commercial activity leading on occasion to distortion of and damage to cultural and natural values. *For example,* despite the gentle and polite request at *Uluru* for visitors to refrain from climbing on the monolith, it is a matter of clear regret that the request is often not honoured by visitors. Whether that occurs through ignorance or lack of respect we cannot judge, but it does impinge adversely on the cultural value of the place to the nation, and to the local people – and, as it happens, on the appreciation of the place by those visitors who do comply with the clearly placed signage.  We summarise our comments thus: fine words are great, but real protection requires action. It cannot be effective unless it is agreed, and it cannot be agreed unless the broader geographic and societal context is considered, involved, and activated in each case. We would like to see the draft Strategy revised so that each of its stated commitments and proposed actions is phrased as clearly and accountably as practical to encompass the whole picture.  Hylda Rolfe, Principal  7 May 2014 | |