



ACT Heritage Council

23 May 2014

Stephen Oxley
First Assistant Secretary
Wildlife, Heritage and Marine Division
Department of the Environment
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Oxley

Australian Heritage Strategy

I refer to the recent call for further submissions regarding the Australian Heritage Strategy. The ACT Heritage Council wishes to confirm its continued support for such a strategy, and I write to provide a further submission.

We remain happy to provide more information if requested.

Yours sincerely

Duncan Marshall
Chair
ACT Heritage Council



ACT Heritage Council Submission – Draft Australian Heritage Strategy

The ACT Heritage Council welcomes the draft strategy and it remains an important initiative. The draft strategy includes many important statements and commitments, the structure is broadly suitable for its purpose, and the strategy is helpfully simple and brief.

In responding to the draft strategy, the ACT Heritage Council has focused on a few targetted outcomes that would be appropriate for a national strategy but would also help the heritage of the ACT. These outcomes are provided below.

The Australian Heritage Strategy should:

- promote an **integrated, comprehensive and up to date listing of the ACT's heritage across all planning systems** to provide the community and business sectors with a single, web-based reference point – consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to a one-stop shop approach. The strategy should also promote a national database to enable cross-jurisdictional research and understanding. This has been attempted previously, but requires stronger leadership, inter-jurisdictional cooperation, and realistic funding to be successful. The proliferation of lists and registers appears both ineffective and inefficient;
- provide for **national coordination of and cooperation in research** to respond to common heritage issues facing more than a single jurisdiction, including methodological and technical conservation issues, as well as issues regarding knowledge about heritage (eg. thematic studies). The Heritage Chairs and Officials Australia and New Zealand could be one suitable body for this coordination and cooperation. In tough economic times, such coordination and cooperation is a sensible initiative;
- provide **effective national monitoring and reporting** of identification, protection, conservation and interpretation activities, with clear feedback links to government heritage policies and programs. The statutory Commonwealth State and the Environment Report could be a hub for this monitoring and reporting, and the basis for cooperation and greater efficiencies. State of the environment reporting at Commonwealth and State/Territory levels has had a mixed history in its application to heritage issues, and cooperation on indicators and data-gathering methods and sharing is critical to its success;
- support **heritage training** based on a review of existing activities and needs, and such support should be guided by a national strategic framework. Declining heritage skills (in trades, conservation skills and management practice) are a recognised area of great concern which will severely impact on the ability of Australia to achieve good conservation outcomes;
- support **physical conservation works** (including technical advice and funding support) through a package of targeted measures. As a first step, an outline of a package of measures should be drafted for national consideration, based on a review of the private/public benefits, the concept of mutual obligation, costs, need and capacity. The apparent great imbalance between the burden on heritage owners and the support provided by the community needs a long term and more equitable solution, and progress in this area is a vital issue for the strategy; and
- re-commit **the Commonwealth to being an exemplar** with regard to the identification, protection, conservation and interpretation of heritage assets in its care. Consistency in identification, listing and management planning in the application of the Commonwealth Heritage List and National Heritage List systems, for example, have been patchy and less than transparent. The major role of the Commonwealth in heritage matters in the ACT makes this a very important issue for the Territory.

Finally, the strategy should have a timetable for review and revision.

22 May 2014