# 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:** | **Budj Bim Sustainable Development Partnership Leadership Group** |
| **Name of Author:** | **Elizabeth Gomm** |
| **Date:** | **30 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? | |
| The critical priority is to have the Budj Bim Lava Flow and Cultural Landscape placed on the National Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage and that the Commonwealth Government support and work in partnership with the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) to achieve World Heritage listing. To that end the site needs to be recognised in this Heritage Strategy as a priority site for assessment for potential listing and the Commonwealth Government then needs to continue working constructively with the GMTOAC, the Victorian government and other key stakeholders to achieve World Heritage listing as a priority project of international significance. | |
| 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? | |
| I am a member of the Budj Bim Sustainable Development Partnership Leadership Group (BBSDP). The BBSDP Leadership Group is an open forum for people, organisations and community groups that have an interest in the sustainable development of the Lake Condah, Mt Eccles and Tyrendarra area. The BBSDP is working in partnership with the traditional owners of the land through the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC). The partnership has seen remarkable improvement to the landscape and continues to create employment and tourism development for the site and broader area. | |
| 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? | |
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| **Other comments** | |
| As a member of the BBSDP I wish to comment on and have noted my concern that the Budj Bim Lava Flow and Cultural Landscape was not included in the Draft Heritage Strategy and in particular that it was omitted from Section 1 (c) of the draft Strategy which aims to “pursue greater recognition and protection of our natural and cultural history, particularly our Indigenous cultural heritage”.  While I applaud the draft strategy’s focus on indigenous cultural heritage, it is my contention that the Budj Bim lava flow and attendant Cultural Landscape should be included in the Heritage Strategy and be incorporated into the following proposed actions:   * Identify priority sites for assessment for potential World Heritage listing, including significant elements of Cape York Peninsula with Indigenous support, Sydney’s Royal National Park * Work with the Victorian Government to pursue National Heritage listing of the Queen Victoria Markets in Melbourne, and then investigate the potential for World Heritage listing.   Budj Bim was added to Australia’s National Heritage List in 2004 in recognition of its outstanding significance to the nation. Since then the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC), which represents the Gunditjmara native-title holders, has undertaken a number of consultations with Commonwealth and Victoria Government representatives and Departments. They undertook a close consultation process with the Aboriginal Affairs Department Victoria, which resulted in an independent Heritage Consultant’s report[[1]](#footnote-1) concluded in 2013. This Report was tasked with assessing whether the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape was worth pursuing for UNESCO World Heritage status. Overwhelmingly it concluded that it should be and stated that:  *“The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is a rare, intact and representative example of ‘intensively manipulated eco-cultural landscapes’ that has survived through the continuity of Gunditjmara cultural and social practices and active management of the landscape. The use of stone as a raw material and the relative lack of development on the ‘stones’ or lava flow following European settlement means that the tangible evidence of the aquaculture system has survived. Many other eeling sites known from the historical documentary record including Mt William and Toolondo in Victoria, and those of Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand have been significantly impacted by processes of colonisation and changing land use and have now disappeared or lack the integrity and authenticity of Budj Bim. The scale and the ability to ‘read’ the system of aquaculture in the Budj Bim landscape makes it not only representative of the very wide range of sites and landscapes created by Indigenous use of wetlands and aquatic resources but also exceptional.”*  *Budj Bim ranks highly when compared with similar properties globally and can fill a critical gap on the World Heritage List…. Most importantly, the Comparative Analysis found that there are no sites on the World Heritage List or on the Tentative Lists that have a suite of attributes similar to those of the Gunditjmara aquaculture system and could be considered a better exemplar of these values….(and that) The work completed in this Comparative Analysis provides a sound basis for proceeding to a Tentative Listing. p73*  The Report went further and stated that:  *The report concludes that (these) statements of potential Outstanding Universal Value are sufficient to support a submission for inclusion of Budj Bim Cultural Landscape on …(Australia’s)Tentative List in relation to the values of the Gunditjmara aquaculture system (vi)*  It also stated that  *“The Victorian Government in collaboration with Gunditjmara (through GMTOAC) should prepare a submission to the Australian Government seeking their support for the inclusion of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape on Australia’s Tentative List.” p73*  Even if not successful in achieving UNESCO World Heritage recognition the site remains highly significant within Australia and for that reason should be recognised and listed in the final Heritage Strategy.  Finally I note again the Draft Strategy’s emphasis on recognizing and protecting indigenous culture. To date, most indigenous heritage sites either on the National register or recognised by UNESCO are confined to a few States or Territories, primarily Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland and that south eastern Australian indigenous sites and continuing culture are under-represented. The Gunditjmara have lived continuously on their country for more than 30,000 years and have managed the cultural landscape interrelationship of eels and other resources, the stones and lava flow and surrounding wetlands for at least 6000 years. Since 1987 they have officially managed the Indigenous heritage values of the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape through the Windamara Aboriginal Corporation and other Aboriginal organisations. They have participated in and sponsored scientific research, developed management plans, and ensured the improved functioning of the landscape. They are actively involved in managing the landscape through ‘caring for country’ programs.  I believe that based on this history and engagement of the Gunditjmara in protecting their natural and cultural heritage plus the independent evidence provided in the Consultant’s Report, that:   * Bidj Bim should be identified as a priority site for assessment for potential World Heritage listing in the Strategy for Australia’s Heritage and that * GMTOAC should be encouraged and enabled to work in collaboration with the Victorian Government to develop a submission to the Australian Government seeking its support for the inclusion of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape on Australia’s Tentative List.   Elizabeth Gomm | |

1. Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape Australian and International Desktop Comparative Report prepared for the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria 2013 by Context Pty Ltd [↑](#footnote-ref-1)