# 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 | |
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| **Date:** | **5 June 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? | |
| Important areas for the Australian Government to provide guidance and support for our national heritage:  I am not sure how much the government wants to expand its role beyond the areas listed as 1a to 1 d in this section. It is possible that many of us were hoping for more than the government can or is willing to give in terms of leadership. As it is, these areas seem fine if the strategy is only intended to be short term. However, I hope there is another opportunity further down the track to expand them.  For instance, we need more commitment to providing leadership in areas such as initiating nation-wide baseline studies of the nature of Australia’s heritage that document more of what survives than the State of the Environment reporting mechanism is able to provide and looks in areas where no one has before. A greater understanding of what is still out there needs to be integrated with existing data. Whether we are talking about Indigenous archaeological sites or archives of historical papers, there should be more emphasis on trying to see the big picture before precious cultural assets are destroyed or lost by development or apathy.  What priority areas are important to you?  Out of the ones presented in the strategy, the least important for me is the National List, which has always seemed a poor substitute for the original National Estate of Australia. Also, it has grown very slowly and unevenly which makes me wonder if a new kind of instrument altogether should be considered that has the best aspects of both the older and the newer national inventories.  What practical actions would you suggest?  Establish a large grants programme for national thematic heritage surveys and inventories of cultural heritage assets that are both tangible and intangible. We badly need more of a ‘big picture’ view of all kinds of heritage assets. No wonder the National List is unbalanced.  Review the need for the National List in its current form and whether a better instrument could be considered. | |
| 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? | |
| There is a lot to cover in this section, however, I will confine my comments to two key areas:   1. Green Army 2. The commitment to encouraging more contact between the heritage and tourism sectors   The Green Army programme seems to have been developed apart from the National Strategy, although this may not be true. It certainly feels like it is. Also, it feels like conservation works to heritage places is a part that has been tacked on later. The authors of the strategy appear to be using it as a universal cure for myriad woes, which could mean that many expectations will not be met. Also, it is curious that there is not a separate programme for cultural heritage with a snappier name, such as Past Preservers (it will need another name, of course, as this one is in use in the UK). The works for natural and cultural heritage places may have some overlap in type of activity in rural areas (weeding, removal of pests and so on), but the needs of urban heritage conservation projects could be very dissimilar to those for natural heritage. For instance, projects may be shorter and would benefit from the involvement of university students, whose holidays would not match the minimum time required. The use of the Green Army in this way needs much more thought in terms of its application. Again, the issue about short-term versus long-term solutions also applies here.  More contact and better partnerships between heritage and tourism sectors is an aim that has been trumpeted by many authorities in many countries. While it is good to re-state it here in the strategy, by not offering more detail to assist or facilitate this aim, opportunities could be being lost. One that springs to mind is how by establishing special heritage regions that match particular heritage themes might be developed with the view to encouraging heritage tourism. It requires the involvement of special not-for-profit organisations to coordinate the relationship between sectors and keep communication channels open in each heritage region. With an increasing number of tourists interested in self-drive tourism more needs to be done to ‘bundle’ experiences for them. Also, such organisations can aid in the provision of information across State borders.  Again, having better thematic or baseline studies of heritage will assist to identify where the potential lies. There are some areas that have been doing an informal version of this already (Victorian Goldfields, for instance). However, the big picture view allows for better coordination of a series of national heritage regions across Australia. The authors of the National Heritage strategy should view the model developed by US Federal agencies for their National Heritage Areas (NHAs) designated by US Congress as an example. Even though this programme has been going for 30 years, it is still finding innovative ways to present and coordinate heritage tourism experiences. It has been remarkably successful in providing a framework for the kind of partnerships needed, where government cannot be expected to do everything in order to encourage and promote sustainable heritage tourism. | |
| 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? | |
| A few issues I would like to highlight in relation to the priorities and related actions for this section are in relation to:   1. Creating incentives for care of heritage 2. Further development of national standards and best practice guidelines for conservation and management of heritage places 3. Build a more comprehensive understanding of the condition of our collective national heritage   Creating incentives for care of heritage priority has an action attached which is very vague, “Encourage additional support from other government agencies and private heritage organisations to add value to worthwhile conservation projects.” Some guidelines would need to be developed to apply this action and also some way of measuring whether it has been successfully implemented. As it is, I fear that it will either be ignored or prove impossible for the relevant authorities to implement, because it is too vague. Hopefully, the authors of this strategy will take the time to include suggestions to define this action more clearly.  Further development of national standards and best practice guidelines for conservation and management of heritage places. This is an action that seems to come out of nowhere, as I can see no reference to issues that have spurred it in the summary of submissions, unlike to two actions below it. Is it really necessary? In regard to heritage places, most cultural heritage professionals (including those in administrative positions) who are concerned with the management of heritage places are members of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). As such, we follow the well established and much updated [Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance](http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/BURRA-CHARTER-1999_charter-only.pdf) *(The Burra Charter).* The National Strategy therefore needs to state more clearly what the issues are behind this action in regard to national standards and best practice guidelines and how this action will complement existing codes and charters in use, such as the Burra Charter, in Australia for both cultural and natural heritage.  Build a more comprehensive understanding of the condition of our collective national heritage. This action should be expanded upon a bit more to relate it back to the concerns about comprehensiveness of existing inventories and also how further research could be conducted that does not come from only impact assessment studies. Too often information about the condition and significance of heritage places, particularly archaeological sites, is only collected as a result of particular areas being investigated for cultural heritage impact assessment (CHIA). Hence, a bias is introduced into these studies in that there are rarely studies of areas nearby that are not at risk of development. Information is not always fully available in some places as developers restrict access to reports and much of what is in the public arena presents a fragmentary view of the extent and nature of this heritage.  An initiative is needed whereby developers should be encouraged to contribute one percent of total development costs towards a national fund to conduct large surveys and inventories of regions to update baseline data on cultural heritage. This will help with a more comprehensive understanding of collective national heritage and also enhance the effectiveness of CHIA studies. | |
| **Other comments** | |
| I have made one suggestion for alternative funding for research (the developers’ fund mentioned above) I would hope that other submissions will make complementary and similar suggestions. However, there are really two kinds of national research programmes that are needed and in which the private sector could be encouraged or even legally required to play a role:  1. Thematic heritage studies that identify more and a broader a range of heritage assets for potential development for tourism on a regional and even cross-border basis. This could be fully or partially funded from a one percent levy of the total construction costs of tourism infrastructure projects. Sponsorship by a broad range of tourism organisations could also be encouraged, as they will inevitably benefit from the results and can access the information.  2. National survey/inventory research programme into our collective national heritage with baseline studies of places that have never been investigated/inventoried and which can be integrated with existing information. This is imperative to strengthen our understanding of our heritage and its future care. The national survey/inventory research fund should have broader terms of reference than any before (including the former National Estate Research Grants Programme), offer grants on a competitive basis and be centrally administered. It should be funded either totally or partially by the private sector, particularly as development has been the major cause of much of the destruction of certain kinds of heritage. Information from the studies could be compiled in a central database and shared with State, local and Indigenous heritage agencies/organisations. | |