

The Australian Heritage Strategy - submission  
Heritage Branch  
Department of the Environment  
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Dear Australian Heritage Strategy Team,

This submission is from the Sydney and Northern NSW Branch of the Australian Garden History Society, a national society with some 2000 members. The Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.

The Branch welcomes a National Heritage Strategy and the opportunity to contribute. We welcome open discussion among Australians about what we value, what makes us unique or marks out differences particular to our regions, topography, climate and peoples.

The Branch believes that communities value cultural landscapes because: they demonstrate the evolution of our society, contain intangible history such as stories, legends and myths, spiritual and symbolic meaning; and are highly regarded as beautiful. There are many Australian cultural landscapes that are worthy of protection for future generations, this strategy could be instrumental in such conservation.

The Branch wishes to make the following comments about the strategy. We would be grateful for updates on the progress of the strategy and other opportunities to contribute.

Issues important to heritage management in Australia that we recommend the strategy should embrace:

- a) comprehensive assessment and identification and (where practicable) heritage-listing and active management of Australia's diverse **landscape heritage**, at macro and micro scale. This is what distinguishes our 'wide brown land', the driest continent, from others. The current National Landscapes Programme is a promising start, but hopelessly limited to natural landscapes, totally ignoring cultural landscapes, such as iconic vineyard landscapes of the Hunter or Barossa Valleys (if Australians happily get on planes to visit French or Italian vineyard landscapes, why wouldn't they (or others) visit 'ours'?), mixed farming landscapes of Tasmania's Midlands, extensive pastoral landscapes such as inland NSW, Victoria and Queensland. The 'green fringe' of coast where most Australians live, is a small part of a much larger picture, the drier and arid interior and the north too little seen or appreciated. Our definition of '*landscape heritage*' follows\*;
- b) comprehensive assessment and identification and (at the appropriate level) heritage-listing and active management of **Australia's diverse garden heritage**. The last time the federal government focussed on and funded this was 1979-80! More on what the AGHS means by this is provided at the end\*\*

- c) **funding and resourcing** (trained and experienced facilitators, funds, venues, time) to ensure wide **community consultation** (accepting that private owners, community groups and individuals manage (and mostly own) the great majority of Australia), taking adequate time to do so particularly with parts of the Australian community whose first language is not English, Indigenous and remote communities. One form of consultation may not ‘work’ in culturally-appropriate ways with all parts of the community. One ‘time of day’ or ‘day of the week’ may similarly not work equally with all;
- d) Adequate **federal government resources** (including a revised **taxation** system and the **lottery** system, noting the UK Heritage Lotteries Fund as an obvious example) must be provided to ensure state governments, cash-strapped local Councils and community groups are both able to participate in a process of identifying key issues to be addressed in a 5-10 year strategy, agreeing those priorities and (with again, more resourcing), implementing them. Shutting down the Register of the National Estate giving State and Local Government a couple of years to ‘list what they need to’ with no additional resources was hardly a good start. Federal government leadership and resourcing should not stop at ‘World’ and ‘National’ level heritage items or issues, but ‘trickle-down’ to other levels of government and community groups to empower them to take action to identify and conserve heritage;
- e) We support the notion of a **national ‘Places at Risk’ register** (building on the National Trust of Australia’s Endangered Places list)’. This should include peri-urban productive landscapes, where our cities’ vegetables, fruit, flowers, turf and more is produced. Protecting these through appropriate land zoning and providing incentives to support diversification of food and fibre production will benefit all and help make ‘food miles’ shorter, fossil fuel (to transport freight) use less and thus our food chain more sustainable;
- f) We encourage the federal government to **increase available support** for heritage festivals, local histories, family histories, storytelling, heritage tours, cultural tourism, etc. These have obvious economic as well as cultural benefits and can create employment in small and remote communities, generate goodwill and tourism-generated benefits. The AGHS has held a national conference in a different Australian region every year since 1980, drawing hundreds of participants and providing significant local benefits. Each branch runs its own local or regional events programme, projects such as conservation or recording of historic gardens, again stimulating skills development, local pride, jobs and tourism attractions in some cases;
- g) We urge the federal government to **lead by example**, in improved management of **government owned heritage assets**. This might include mandatory preparation of conservation management plans, revised significance assessments, maintenance schedules and asset management advice to all federal government agencies, contractors and lessees occupying or managing these, Australia-wide. It must include beefed up programme and timelines requiring all federal agencies to identify their heritage assets within 24 months, if not previously done, describe them, identify their levels of heritage significance and demonstrate how this is being/will be managed appropriately. It must include requiring all federal agencies seeking to dispose of heritage assets to budget for and prepare adequate a) current conservation management plans; b) prepare nominations to state/territory heritage registers to

- ensure these places are listed/protected before they are put on the real estate market;
- c) ensure adequate handover information to new owners including copies of (a) and (b) above, listings information, advice on ongoing management. It might also include online advice and guidelines to other levels of government and heritage managers;
- h) Increased national research funding – e.g. revival/expansion of previous AHC programme of commissioning research papers/identification projects by theme – inspirational landscapes, coastal landscapes, recreational landscapes, pastoral landscapes, horticultural landscapes...
- i) Demonstrated linkages between ARC grants, employment skills creation/maintenance programmes (professional/trade ‘points’ for heritage trade training/skills upgrading/courses to keep up to date with product or practice changes), Australia Council and AHC grants to maximize their reach and linkages between heritage place conservation, trade skills training, on-the-job-learning, community building and boosting local identity and social cohesiveness. Make such goals requirements of funding – with reporting and public outreach components, milestones etc.
- j) More systematic publication and distribution of research results, industry/sector statistics (new jobs created, total job numbers, apprenticeships with heritage skills, income, expenditure, \$:\$ invested/matched by communities, benefits, outcomes...) using opportunities provided by new IT and social media;
- k) Increased resourcing for AHC staff and a widened scope of work especially assistance to the states and territories to ‘pick up’ and heritage-list former Register of the National Estate listings/interim listings that have not been listed on State/territory heritage registers, commission current condition surveys – checking if these places still exist and in what condition?; paying for preparation of nominations (staff, time, support) to speed their heritage-listing within, say 2 years maximum;
- l) Increased resourcing for AHC staff and scope of work especially focused on broader inclusion of nominations (commissioning these, broadening the priority listing themes, working to upgrade existing nominations deferred / dropped due to inadequate information or staff resourcing) to the National Heritage List;
- m) Strengthening links between governments through forums such as COAG, Ministerial Councils, Heritage Chairs & Officials committees, Heritage Education and Information professionals, etc – and funding them sufficiently to ensure they can publish findings, co-publish useful guideline or benchmarking documents online etc;
- n) Identify overlap opportunities to link school, TAFE and university curriculae with heritage trades training opportunities, heritage site analyses, conservation studies, practical workshops, visits, recording of sites etc. Build these into curriculae with targeted programmes, funding of material editing/shaping to fit subjects/courses in all states etc.
- o) The current state of heritage training and education in Australia, including the application of the results of the limited research that is undertaken unfinished sentence.

**\*Landscape heritage** – means the design, conservation, maintenance and management of landscape, including:

- agricultural/ horticultural/ silvicultural, ‘natural’(e.g. our federal and state reserve systems), peri-urban, urban, coastal
- covering land use planning, land use conflict resolution (e.g. coal seam gas v agriculture; mining v agriculture; agriculture v urban; ‘natural’ v agriculture; ‘natural’ v urban
- ‘system’/macro landscapes (agriculture, forestry, urban);
- ‘macro?’ landscapes such as suburbs v cities / urban conglomerations, open space networks, transport landscapes – highway corridors, railway corridors...is this next bit another point – cultural landscapes associated with river systems, wetlands and swamps, beaches, coastal dunes;
- ‘micro’or designed landscapes such as parks, gardens, urban plazas, cemeteries, botanic gardens, nature strips, community gardens/ allotments.
- associative landscapes with religious, sacred and artistic cultural associations that represent works of communities or individuals.

**\*\* Garden heritage:**

The Society believes that historic gardens are an important part of our heritage, and that this assessment is widely shared within the community. The effort many people put into their gardens, the numbers who visit gardens such as capital cities’ botanic gardens and private gardens open through *Open Gardens Australia* Scheme and the popularity of garden tours demonstrate this. While many sorts of gardens attract interest it is old gardens with mature trees and patinated hard landscaping, that is, heritage gardens, which are the most attractive and popular. And, it could be argued, they are the most subject to threats as redevelopment pressure on land in our cities and towns, water, labour and other input factor prices increase. The Society is concerned that, despite the high regard in which they are held by the community, gardens and landscapes are poorly represented on state and local government heritage registers, lists and overlays and thus many key heritage gardens do not receive the protection they deserve.

In 2010 the Society commissioned Catherine Brouwer Landscape Architects and Nissen Associates to investigate and report on how well heritage gardens in Queensland are represented on heritage lists. The study found that the state, local government and National Trust lists concentrated on buildings and that while some gardens were listed there were many gaps and omissions.

In 2012 the Society asked consultants Timothy Hubbard and Annabel Neylon to carry out a similar investigation for the other Australian states and the Australian Capital Territory. They found that while the situation was a little better in Victoria and New South Wales, gardens in general had been neglected in favour of buildings in compiling statutory heritage lists. Both studies are available on the Society’s website [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

The branch submits that:

- the strategy should recognise gardens are an important component of our heritage which has not received sufficient attention in the drawing up of heritage registers and lists;
- to overcome this deficit in the strategy should include specific priority actions to identify and assess old gardens and add significant ones to heritage registers;
- to achieve this heritage authorities will have to employ more staff with gardens knowledge.

The branch supports:

- funding a network of heritage advisers to assist local government on heritage and planning, but ensure these advisers have access to expert garden and landscape advice.
- New or enhanced grant programs to support heritage garden owners to undertake necessary works (such as expensive tree surgery). As is well known, grants are often seeding funds, leading to owners investing much more money on conservation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Quoyale', written in a cursive style.

James Quoyale  
Secretary  
Sydney & Northern NSW Branch  
Australian Garden History Society  
6 June 2014