# Template FOR INPUT INTO THE

**AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Overview  This template should be used to provide comments on the content of the Australian Heritage Strategy. | |
| Contact Details | |
| **Name of Organisation:** |  |
| **Name of Author:** | **Dr Bruce Pennay** |
| **Date:** | **8 June 2014** |
|  | |
| 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? | |
| I welcome the news of an enhanced websites to record achievements of the new Community Heritage and Icons program and to draw attention to the ‘best loved’ sites. It is important to provide examples of the kinds of heritage stories that the community is being encouraged to share. The examples will help communities to select their heritage stories and give some leads as to how to go about story telling.  I have personally found, through several projects, that the National Community Heritage program conducted by the National Library is a powerful way of helping local communities (usually local museum or history groups) to explore the significance of their nominated items or groups of items. With modest funding, communities, ponder how their items and stories fit with, verify, add to or contradict other stories, at other levels. The determination of significance is the first step that has to be taken before applications can be made for conservation funding. I do hope that program continues. Further, I suggest close liaison with those who conduct the National Community Heritage program in devising the new Community Heritage and Icons program. | |
| 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 have been involved with the interpretation of the former Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre. It has been heartening to see support across jurisdictions and across all levels of government. Both the Commonwealth and the Victorian governments have committed funds to fabric conservation. The Victorian Government has funded tourism related planning and activities. Local government in Albury (NSW) has committed considerable resources to its Bonegilla Collection and has been energetic and cooperative in arranging exhibitions of those materials. Local government in Wodonga (Victoria) has assumed responsibilities for site management and visitation. The National Archives of Australia holds extensive records and makes then available through interesting ways (<https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au/site/> and its forthcoming exhibition on migrant hostels). The NSW state government through its Migrant Resource Centre has collected and published a large number of oral histories. The support of former residents of Bonegilla and members of ethnic communities is best illustrated in the production of my publication *Greek Journeys through Bonegilla* which won commendation for community collaboration in the Victorian Community History Awards.  As I explained in my first submission when comments were first sought on a strategy there are difficulties in devolving the cost burden of daily maintenance of a heritage site to local government, the most impoverished of the three tiers. Ratepayers are not keen to pick up the costs of supplying electricity, water, pest control, visitor safety management etc when the heritage values of the site are shared more widely. The place belongs to Wodonga and is part of Wodonga’s story, but it also belongs to the state and to the nation. Costs as well as resources should be shared. | |
| 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? | |
| Local heritage items are more likely to win wider attention if their links with other national or familiar stories are well established. Hopefully the proposed examples will make national or personal significance plain. | |
| **Other comments** | |
| I am pleased the strategy is being completed and I am pleased there is some funding in the budget to encourage community engagement. Don Garden’s arguments advancing the wisdom of engaging the vast army of volunteers in and outside history societies seem to have been successful. That which is usually a Grey Army has the wit, knowhow and energy to engage productively in caring for and promoting our cultural heritage. Guidance with story selection and with storytelling will enhance the Grey Army’s contribution. | |