# 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:** | Southern Ocean Exploration |
| **Name of Author:** | **Martin Tozer** |
| **Date:** | **09/06/14** |
|  | |
| 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? | |
| **Leadership in Heritage**  The Heritage Strategy contains virtually no reference to Australia’s maritime heritage and this would appear to be a significant omission. Australia as an island nation evolved, developed and prospered through maritime connections with the rest of the world. From the very first inhabitants to the colonization, federation, trade and war, each pivotal moment in Australia’s history has a strong maritime connection. Even today as massive bulk carriers export our natural resources to Asia, Australia’s history and future is inextricably linked to our maritime heritage and culture.  The sea has always been unpredictable and from the earliest of times to present day our development and progress has come at a cost. Australia’s coastline is the final resting place for 1000’s of shipwrecks that lie awaiting discovery and exploration, each one a fascinating story in itself but also providing a lens into our nation’s history. In order to show the Australian Government is committed to the protection of our maritime heritage the Government should sign off on the UNESCO’s Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.  **Government Guidance and Support**  We support the concept of the Green Army program and recommend a maritime version being a "Blue Army Programme" to recognize the distinction between maritime and terrestrial heritage and the avocational community groups that contribute to the discovery and protection of maritime heritage sites. Members of the Blue Army would be trained via short courses on maritime archaeology conducted by the Australian Institute of Maritime Archaeology.  **Priority Areas.**  The representative National Heritage list should be developed to include shipwreck sites and a complete audit and listing of the significant shipwrecks be established. Government funding is required to be committed to the protection of the archaeological material at these sites.  We support the recognition to find innovative funding approaches to protect heritage sites and believe priority should be given to significant shipwreck sites as they are under immediate threat of looting, vandalism and environmental erosion. | |
| 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? | |
| **Partnerships most needed**.  The strategy should recognise and support the connection of the Scuba Diving industry and the tourism potential for significant underwater cultural heritage sites and how beneficial partnerships can provide heritage protection through education.  **Successful innovative Partnerships.**  Southern Ocean Exploration (SOE) is a team of self-funded avocational maritime archaeologist and scuba divers who over the last ten years have discovered more than a dozen historically significant shipwrecks. These discoveries include the 19th century SS *Alert*, which sank in Bass Strait with the loss of 17 lives, to the enormous Gallipoli hospital ship TSS *Kanowna*, which lay untouched for almost a century in Tasmanian waters. SOE has solved many historical anomalies, reconciled relatives with their tragic pasts, and created a sense of excitement about Australian maritime history. Southern Ocean Exploration works closely with Heritage Victoria and are members of the Maritime Archaeology Association Victoria (MAAV) and Australian Institute of Maritime Archaeology (AIMA). SOE is representative of a model for community partnership and engagement in exploring and protecting our maritime heritage. | |
| 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? | |
| **Ideas for Better Community Engagement**  The Australian heritage sector can provide further support to the Australian Institute of Maritime Archaeology and avocational maritime heritage groups to develop a schools learning program for Australian History subjects whereby maritime history and archaeology can be taught in the class room to educate our young on Australia’s maritime past.  Whilst education and community engagement will assist with the care of heritage sites, there will always be requirement to enforce the various legislations that are established to protect these sites. Shipwrecks and UCH sites are particularly vulnerable to looting and vandalism due to the remote and out of sight locations.  National recognition is required as to the significant risk of the loss of underwater cultural heritage material and more resources are required to be allocated to pursue and prosecute perpetrators who break the law and remove material from the maritime sites.  **Promotion of Local Heritage**  SOE has been working with White Water Documentaries for the past five years to produce a documentary series on Australia’s Maritime Heritage. The documentaries centre on the discovery of historic shipwrecks and the impact that discovery has on the living relatives of the victims of the disaster. Our current project is to discover the first shot fired by the British Empire in the Great War – Project Longshot. This shot was fired at a fleeing German freighter in Port Phillip Bay, literally only hours after war had been declared. | |
| **Other comments** | |
|  | |