# 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:** | Australian Computer Museum Society Inc. |
| **Name of Author:** | **John GEREMIN** |
| **Date:** | **8th 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. | |
| **Improve National Leadership**  a) What are the most important things the Australian Government should be doing to offer leadership in heritage?  b) 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?  c) What priority areas are important to you, your organisation or group?  d) What practical actions would you suggest to improve national heritage leadership? | |
| 1a. Provide resources for community groups to preserve our heritage.  Remove the requirement for Federal, State and Local governments to charge ‘commercial’ rents for premises that could be used by heritage groups,  eg - old bowling club in Pomeroy Reserve at North Strathfield;  eg – various buildings at Callan Park (old Rozelle Hospital);  eg – old Newtown Tram Shed or old Rozelle Tram Shed.  1b. Better funding mechanisms – eg allow the Australia Council (or alternate body) to provide useful (significant) grants to museums, etc.  1c. Our priorities are more funding and better education re Australia’s technological history. Australians have made important contributions in almost ALL fields of Engineering and Technology. Similarly in medicine and the natural sciences.  1c (cont). I refer to the comments of Prime Minister Rudd re the lack of IT specialists in Australia. A **National Computer Heritage Centre** (hopefully with branches in all major cities) could instil an appreciation of computer technology at an early age, especially when students are selecting subjects in high school.  1d. The greatest changes in Australian Society occurred in the second half of the last century – all due to the rapid development of computer systems – yet there is no sign that any government would support a **National Computer Heritage Centre** in Australia. Just providing a building would allow the volunteers to preserve and display our IT history to all Australians. | |
| **2. Pursue Innovative Partnerships**  a) What partnerships are most needed within the heritage sector?  b) What heritage roles and responsibilities should be led by governments, peak heritage organisations or community groups in the 21st century?  c) How should resources be shared through heritage partnerships to ensure the greatest return on agreed priorities?  d) Can you provide examples of successful innovative partnerships you or your organisation have established? | |
| 2a. Closer collaboration between Federal, State and Local governments re resources for community groups.  2b. The funding role by government is most critical, without government leadership, business and other organisations do not see any importance in supporting heritage groups.  The fact that there are only 100 heritage sites registered in Australia would indicate that the Australian Government does not really care about our heritage sites. We should have had 1000 registered by now.  Some years ago, I was told that our ‘National Museum’ in Canberra does NOT have a mandate to include technology. This, similarly, indicates that our government does not want to recognise all facets of Australia’s heritage.  2c. In many instances a large site (eg Callan Park) or a large building could be shared by a number of heritage groups, thus fostering the exchange of ideas and experiences between groups; and encouraging multi-museum experiences from a single site visit.  2d. The ACMS has yet to establish any significant innovative partnership, yet in Britain, Bletchley Park (WWII code breaking and computer development) has multiple ‘tenancies’ and gets about 250,000 visitors per year. The ACMS has for many years had a significant relationship the PowerHouse Museum in Sydney; as well as with some Universities.  The ‘Mens Shed’ movement is an example of partnerships (usually with Local Councils) that have succeeded, when non-commercial rents were accepted. | |
| **3. Enable encourage communities to understand and care for their heritage**  a) What should the Australian heritage sector be doing to help the Australian community better engage in heritage activities?  b) How can a shared understanding of our national heritage be developed and best celebrated together?  c) Do you have any examples of activities that have been successful in promoting local heritage to a broader audience?  d) What is the role of technology and new media in providing greater community access to heritage? | |
| 3a. Make it easier to get heritage sites registered.  3b. Make it easier for heritage groups to get resources / space, etc. People need to have a ‘heritage experience’ in order to understand heritage and to understand our world. Governments at all levels need to facilitate the experiences by making facilities available for all sorts of groups.  Don’t worry if any groups fail – at least some of the heritage knowledge will have been passed on to the community.  Provide funding for ‘heritage signage’ through Local Councils and Heritage Organisations, so that travellers keep being ‘reminded’ that we DO have heritage in all parts of Australia.  Recognise ‘Social Values’ as well as ‘Material Values’ in regard to our heritage. EG the old EMI buildings in Homebush are ugly and not of great architectural significance – BUT they were the home of EMI Records who produced millions of records under a number of labels. Radio and TV receivers were also manufactured on the site. They should have got a heritage listing when the nearby ‘Arnotts’ site was heritage listed.  3c. Australia’s first electronic computer ‘CSIRAC’ was stored in the back of a Victorian museum warehouse until it was brought back to Melbourne University by Prof Thorne for an anniversary event in 1996, after which it was the feature exhibit in the museum foyer for 10 years.  3d. Computers and the Internet can provide ready access to ‘ historical information’ – great for completing a school essay – BUT, they cannot convey the personal experience of handling a heritage artefact – eg a hand-cranked calculator, or even watching a simple mechanical clock mechanism. So many objects these days are operated by simply pushing buttons with the user having no understanding of what really happens behind the button. Technology Heritage would help people appreciate the functions of the buttons.  Current school curriculum requirements are such that so many facets of Australian history and technology cannot be covered in any depth. On-line encyclopaedia can and do provide an extra level of heritage information – but usually lack the ability to explain the knowledge at an appropriate level for various age groups. | |
| **4. Other comments** | |
| **(as prepared for the Sydney forum on 23rd May, 2014.)**  **By John GEREMIN, ASTC (Electrical Engineering), Grad. Cert. in ‘Traffic Planning & Control’ UNSW,**  **Honorary Curator of the Australian Computer Museum Society Inc [ACMS] – an Educational Charity.**  These personal comments relate primarily to the lack of specialist Technology Museums, especially the proposed **National Computer Heritage Centre** [NCHC]. I again refer to the 2013 comments by ex-PM Kevin Rudd re the need for more IT experts in Australia.  It is generally recognised that an interest in the study of science or technology in high school happens as a result of earlier experiences in museums or similar environments. It should be obvious that if Australia is to remain a ‘clever country’, then governments at all levels need to foster scientific and technical enquiry and learning. In my case I had to ‘rebuild’ a bicycle before I was allowed to ride one; and I had a number of visits to museums in Sydney before getting to high school.  I acknowledge that the ‘PowerHouse Museum’ in Sydney tries to do a good job with limited resources, but the reports that I get are that its computer exhibits leave a lot to be desired. I was briefly associated with the ‘Motor Museum’ in Ultimo that folded due to lack of funding. I have seen various versions of the Telecom Museum downsize and relocate due to lack of funding/support. The ACMS has survived since 1994 solely because of the dedication of a small number of enthusiasts who ‘grew up’ with the heritage systems.  Why the need for a National Computer Heritage Centre ? Because . . .   * Australians have made great contributions to the IT industry – they need to be recognised publicly. * No other museum in Australia has the resources to fully display our heritage IT artefacts. * Bletchley Park in the UK gets around 250,000 visitors per year – it has heritage lottery funding.   NCHC Funding Proposal **– a tiny Levy of $0.01 for each electronic display imported into Australia.**  Some unheralded **Heritage Site** examples :-   * Callan Park in inner Sydney – 60 acres of heritage buildings, plants, environment – previously a psychiatric hospital that also did electrotherapy research work. * The EMI buildings at Homebush (Columbia Lane) – about to be demolished instead of being commemorated for their role in the Australian music industry, TV industry and minor IT development. * The Newtown and Rozelle Tram Sheds – with a little bit of repair or restoration, both could be used by technology heritage groups. Possibly in conjunction with the ‘Mens Shed’ movement.   Economics – it may be cheaper to fund many unknown/unproven heritage projects and let half of them fail than it would be to investigate and test a much smaller number of projects that may have ‘proven prospects’.  I find it dis-heartening that the Australia Council can give many thousands of dollars to ‘performing arts’ groups for one-off events, but cannot support any technology museum with more than $500. (via the MGF). | |
| Please see [www.acms.org.au](http://www.acms.org.au) for the ACMS educational calendars. | |