The Manager

Australian Heritage Strategy Submissions  
Dear Sir/Madam

**Feedback on the Draft Heritage Strategy**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute further to the development of the Australian Heritage Strategy. Engineering Heritage Australia (EHA) made a formal submission through your Template for Input and a letter to the Minister dated 24 January 2014.

We note that the Draft Heritage Strategy has adopted many of the general suggestions proposed in the EHA submission. Presumably we were not alone in making some of these suggestions. However we consider that the strategy could go further in adopting more of the specific suggestions related to engineering and industrial heritage.

We were pleased to see that in defining Australian heritage, four quadrants were used to show the importance of movable and intangible heritage as well as the more traditional view of heritage confined to the tangible immovable aspects related to place. Similarly in answering the question “What is Heritage”, we were pleased to see the inclusion of household objects, machinery and technology along with buildings and landscapes, stories and events. In defining heritage so comprehensively it fully encompasses our area of special interest; that of engineering and industrial heritage.

However the section then goes on to say that the Australian Heritage Strategy is largely focused on heritage places, how they are identified and managed, and the way the Australian community shares and celebrates the stories these places represent. In our view this emphasis on the tangible immovable quadrant potentially excludes much of the heritage of technology that is movable or intangible. While EHA celebrates the development of significant bridges, dams, buildings, industrial sites and structures, there is more that is critical to our understanding of the development of scientific and engineering principles as progressively implemented, often relatively independent of place. These items of heritage are frequently held in community museums and preservation societies where volunteers dedicate many hours to their conservation with very little guidance or assistance. Some significant items of machinery are also held in private collections where export is governed by federal legislation. We consider more could be done under a national heritage strategy to protect such heritage in Australia through fully implementing the 2010 Movable Cultural Heritage plan. Broadening of the Australian Heritage Strategy to more fully embrace the four quadrants mentioned above would be strongly supported by the members of Engineering Heritage Australia, and would be showing greater national leadership in developing partnerships to encourage and support communities that are doing their best to understand and care for their movable heritage.

The above comments relate to the breadth of the strategy and I have attached more specific comments on the three areas where views were requested regarding proposed priorities. One suggestion we would particularly like to draw attention to in our earlier submission and in the attached comments is the idea of reinstating periodic meetings of peak heritage organisations with the Minister and/or the Australian Heritage Council. With other non-government organisations we are willing and available to assist in implementing the strategy and providing better links into the community.

Yours faithfully

Keith Baker

Chair

Engineering Heritage Australia

Attachment A

**Response by Engineering Heritage Australia to Specific Questions   
on the Draft Australian Heritage Strategy**

1. Improve national leadership

Question: What are the most important things the Australian Government should be doing to offer leadership, to encourage and to provide guidance and support for our national heritage?

As acknowledged in the draft Strategy, the States and Territories are custodians of much of our national heritage. Strong leadership by the Australian Government with the States through the COAG process and through less formal means should encourage more unified support for our national heritage in protection, not just in more streamlined procedures.

The draft also acknowledges that movable heritage is included but makes no specific provision for its protection and management. The Australian Government could show strong national leadership by supporting organisations that conserve and interpret movable heritage, and set a strong example through its legislated protection of the export of significant heritage machinery items. These issues were discussed in more detail our earlier submission.

Insurance costs and taxation concessions are also areas where the Australian Government could offer leadership.

Question: We would welcome views about which of the following should be priorities for the Australian Government and potential practical actions to improve national heritage leadership.

a. Improved support for Australia’s iconic World Heritage sites

b. Capture a representative National Heritage List

c. Pursue greater recognition and protection of our natural and cultural heritage, particularly our Indigenous cultural heritage

d. Contribute to international heritage standard setting and guidance

Priorities a to c are all important objectives which the Government should continue.

International heritage standards are important and are pursued in an ongoing way by international organisations such as ICOMOS and TICCIH. The Australian Government’s most useful contribution in this area might be to coordinate and support interested non-government organisations in their efforts to make such standards more comprehensive and unified.

Question: How can the leadership roles played by other parties in the heritage sector be enhanced and what actions can they take in this regard?

As mentioned in discussing priority d above, the leadership role of heritage NGOs could be enhanced by fostering their working together with the Minister and government agencies such as the Australian Heritage Council in implementing and extending government policy. Reinstatement of the National Cultural Heritage Forum was proposed in our letter to the Minister of 24 January 2014.

2. Pursue innovative partnerships

Question: What partnerships are most needed within the heritage sector?

Two levels of partnership are needed in our view. Firstly a strong level of cooperation between Government and peak heritage organisations, and secondly cooperation between professionals with expertise to offer and community heritage organisations that would benefit from professional advice.

Question: 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?

The peak organisations working with their members and government could help to bridge the gulf between heritage experts and hands-on community groups which may lack appropriate guidance in conservation and display of their collections. The government and peak organisations could play a facilitating role in relation to grant applications and pro bono work.

Question: We would welcome views on which of the following partnership approaches should be the focus of the Australian Government and other heritage sector stakeholders.

a. Greater heritage policy and process alignment across all levels of government

b. Building heritage capacity through workforce support, education and training

c. Innovative funding, resource sharing and creative partnerships

d. Foster greater collaboration between heritage and tourism sectors

We consider all of the above are important priorities. It is noted that the draft strategy states that priority a commenced in late 2013. In fact it started, at least at the working level in the built heritage environment, in the mid 1990s when the Australian Heritage Commission developed strong coordination with the State and Territory heritage agencies and this should be revived if it has been allowed to lapse.

We support the idea of giving more recognition to the embodied energy in existing buildings when considering the choice between adaptive reuse and demolition to make way for a new building.

With regard to priority b, Engineering Heritage Australia is planning a continuing professional development program to encourage practicing engineers to be more engaged in heritage conservation and sensitive adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. We expect this initiative give greater opportunities for engineers and to improve the standard of heritage work where a greater understanding of the technical issues is required in the conservation and interpretation of structures, engineering services, industrial sites and machinery.

We also support the concept of professional mentoring through peak heritage organisations to lift the skills and management direction of Green Army projects.

3. Encourage communities to understand and care for their heritage

Question: 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?

While distinguishing between authentic heritage and make believe, the heritage sector need to make discovering heritage and visiting heritage places and works an interesting, exciting and enjoyable experience. Through dynamic displays and related engaging activities to which people can relate, heritage has more prospect of being celebrated than through passive displays and historical facts.

Question: We would welcome views about which of the following should be priorities for the heritage sector to pursue in its efforts to help the community better engage with our heritage places and stories.

a. Creating incentives to care for our heritage

b. Promoting greater knowledge and engagement with our heritage

c. Appropriate timing for the national celebration of Australia’s heritage

d. Management of heritage places

e. Models for recognition of Australian heritage champions

Emphasis on priorities a, b and d should help with engagement of the community, providing engagement is a central part of the funding provided.

It is not clear that there is a single time that suits all for celebrating heritage. Engineering Heritage Australia’s regional groups often join with National Trusts around Australia to celebrate their local heritage week and such participation by all heritage groups should be encouraged.

To take a more national approach, it could be worth broadening Australia Day from celebrating the first European settlement, which tends to alienate indigenous Australians, to celebrating our National Australian heritage, covering Indigenous, natural and built heritage. There are plenty of iconic natural and indigenous places and customs that existed before 1788, as well as the built heritage and achievements since that time that could be the focus of celebrations around Australia.

Recognition of Australian heritage champions should be fostered, but there is scope for encouraging and assisting heritage organisations to nominate their valued achievers for existing awards.