# 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:** | Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) |
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| **Date:** | **4 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. | |
| 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 – National Heritage Listing  Heritage classification such as National Heritage Listing boosts the esteem and understanding of the significance of heritage sites within the wider community. Classification for significant sites increases a heritage site's gravitas and its ability to gain wider support for preservation, restoration and invigoration.  As the draft strategy notes, there are backlogs in the National Heritage Listing's assessment process. That has created an ongoing administrative burden for the Abbotsford Convent Foundation (hereafter referred to as the ACF) as our applications since 2007 have required repetitive attention to resubmit applications. It is a high priority for the ACF to have its applications for National Heritage Listing processed and therefore we welcome the prioritising of thematic studies.  Practical Actions – Funding  The ACF, like many other organisations charged with maintaining heritage infrastructure, must establish a sinking fund to provide long term finance to maintain buildings and sites. Consideration should be given to establishing a federal government fund to fund the heritage department’s programs. The fund could support strategic federal interventions; such as long-term self-managed sinking funds for heritage sites. It could also support the restoration of heritage buildings to house commercial interests that can then support the heritage sites.  A Lottery Fund?  The ACF would welcome the federal government establishing a lottery that funded arts, heritage, culture and community outcomes, similar to what now occurs in West Australia and the UK.    Federal Funds to Leverage Other Support  Whilst the Federal government should not necessarily *wholly* fund the restoration or maintenance of heritage sites, it should continue to provide funds to encourage state and local government, business and philanthropic support.  The ACF’s current highest priority is to raise $18 million to finish the job of restoring the Abbotsford Convent. The ACF is building a coalition of support across the philanthropic, government and business sectors to raise the funds. Having federal support would greatly and in particular encourage state government funding. Previously, federal funds have provided the impetus for significant amounts of matched philanthropic support to be granted.  The federal government's role in unlocking funds through financial support is critical when there will be outcomes of national significance. The ACF is interested in future funding rounds for the *Protecting National Historic Sites* Program and hopes that the program continues to fund those participating in the National Heritage Listing process, rather than just NHL recipients. The ACF also believes *Protecting National Historic Sites* Program should have the capacity to grant amounts in excess of $1M.    Department of Heritage Advocacy for Funding from Other Federal Departments  If there is more demand for funds from the federal heritage department than there are available funds, any encouragement for funding to come from more generously funded government departments to realise heritage outcomes would be welcomed. In this sense, adaptive reuse of heritage sites for valuable contemporary uses should be encouraged.  How Heritage Outcomes at the Abbotsford Convent Would Support Other Government Goals  The Abbotsford Convent now attracts almost 1 million annual visitors and the site's new life as a creative cluster, a cultural tourism site, a community hub and a huge economic driver clearly demonstrates how heritage can be redefined and for broad and valuable long term outcomes. This is evidenced through the following examples:  -The Convent is now Australia’s largest multi-arts site, where the co-location of diverse creative practices encourages a convergence of resources and knowledge and delivers many valuable collaborations.  -The Convent now provides 625 jobs and supports a further 475 jobs elsewhere in the economy.  -Tenant revenue has grew to  almost $34 million dollars in 2013  -International tourism has doubled in the past year (28,000 to 67,000 visitors).  -$7 million dollars annually is spent by visitors at businesses located on site.    Plans to restore the final 40% of the site will provide strong economic green shots to Australia’s economy. Ground floor spaces will offer a range of appealing artisanal stores and provide for dynamic performance, workshop, film shoot, conference, event, exhibition and lecture spaces; all offering unique cultural tourism experiences. The upper floors will foster a new cluster of start-up creative micro-businesses; such as digital content providers, online retailers, designers, advertisers, e-publishers, makers, independent entrepreneurs, animators, games developers, producers and more. This knowledge-based start-up campus will power jobs in the advanced tertiary sub-sectors of entertainment, media and technology. Combined with the practitioners already onsite, the power of the creative industry at the Convent will be formidable.    If restoration support for the Convent from the federal government can not be funded by the heritage department, support for the upper floors could come from the federal government’s Entrepreneur’s Infrastructure Fund. Support for the precinct’s tourism outcomes could come from the Department of Regional Development.  Whilst sustainability interventions to retrofit heritage buildings for adaptive reuse save much energy and resources, many federal government funding programs within the Department of Environment only fund energy use reduction. This is impossible to quantify if heritage buildings have been sitting unused for a number of years. Criteria for programs such as the Emissions Reduction Fund should take into account energy savings made when housing businesses into already built but currently empty, buildings.    The above examples show how support and representation by the Minister responsible for Heritage to other departments can be directed to support heritage outcomes. When the federal government funds heritage outcomes, the department or Minister can leverage that support  and encourage other areas of government to participate in funding that project (eg. Federal government support contingent on further state support etc.)    Leadership: The Abbotsford Convent Foundation is a Showcase Heritage Site  *Once* restored, the Convent will require no future government funding as the associated increase in rental income will ensure the full financing of the ACF's operations into perpetuity.  The ACF believes that the social enterprise model of activating heritage with congruent commercial activity is the way forward. To this effect, the ACF funds 100% of its operations through commercial activity that annually funds maintenance and some restoration.    The ACF advises, at no cost, many other organisations that are interested in learning about its model of social enterprise to activate heritage. During 2010, site tours were undertaken by councillors and executives of 103 Australian local councils.  In 2011 the ACF met with 329 Australian community leaders who wanted to replicate the ACF's  model of invigorating heritage in their respective towns.  The ACF has also observed a high level of desire in the cultural heritage sector  for knowledge about alternative ways to fund heritage sites. The ACF would happily provide the Department of Heritage, free of charge, conference spaces at the Convent if the Department of Heritage wanted to hold a knowledge-sharing forum or conference for managers of heritage sites to gather and discuss commercial activities.    Please see the link below as an example of how the ACF shares its knowledge about building capacity in the heritage sector to self-fund invigoration:  [http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/north/sunbury-asylum-alliance-campaigns-for-new-abbotsford-convent-style-hub-at-jacksons-hill/story-fnglenug-1226940299611](https://mail.abbotsfordconvent.com.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=866b82bb8d424efaa93a7122bd3d5a12&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.heraldsun.com.au%2fleader%2fnorth%2fsunbury-asylum-alliance-campaigns-for-new-abbotsford-convent-style-hub-at-jacksons-hill%2fstory-fnglenug-1226940299611)    Green Army Programs  The ACF has experience working with those who are unemployed through the Howard Government’s Green Corps Program. Whilst well intentioned, there were some complex issues relating to the Green Corps' involvement, creating strain and stress on the under resourced gardening team. In that case, impact versus resources required to manage the project, were unaligned. There would be a number of challenges for the ACF to overcome before accommodating another Green Corps style of program onsite. | |
| 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? | |
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| 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? | |
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| **Other comments** | |
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