# 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 | |
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| **Date:** | **9 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 is an extremely important aspect of any strategy. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth has largely withdrawn from the leadership role it played for two decades from the mid-1970s. This needs to be reversed.  **Consistent Regimes and Best Practice**  The most important thing that the Australian government should be doing to offer leadership in heritage is to work with the states (and local government) to ensure consistent regimes and best practice.  A significant element in Part 2 of the draft, ‘innovative partnerships’, discusses the current misalignment between the three levels of government. The FAHS believes that this matter is better placed in Part 1, Leadership, as such challenges will be best overcome if the Commonwealth provides the mechanism for greater cooperation and alignment.  Point 2a refers to the need for ‘greater heritage policy and alignment across all levels of government’, and it identifies the ‘complexity, confusion and inconsistency’ of the various laws, regulations and regimes across the country. However, the only apparent suggested ‘strategy’ for dealing with this failing is the ‘one stop shop’.  Many questions can be raised about the ‘one-stop shop’, such as whether state regimes are suited to carry out such responsibilities. Besides, there seems to be no allowance for appropriate Commonwealth monitoring of the states, and the recent loss of Commonwealth departmental staff makes it seem unlikely that such monitoring will be possible. It is also critical that Commonwealth Ministers resist political and commercial pressures in the states that lobby to have heritage values set aside.  Part 3, Community Heritage, also refers to the need for the development of coherent regimes, national standards and best practice guidelines. The FAHS proposes that, once more, this should be an element in which the Commonwealth can take a leadership role.  The FAHS proposes that an ‘Australian Heritage Strategy’ or ‘National Heritage Strategy’ should be substantially concerned with finding ways to improve and make more coherent state and local government regimes.  The Commonwealth should be leading all three levels of government towards a coherent and consistent set of legislation and procedures and establishment of national standards. This might be done through the Commonwealth convening meetings of Heritage Ministers, or the Australian Heritage Council convening meetings of Heritage officials.  The Australian Heritage Council, like its predecessor the Australian Heritage Commission, should be supported to play a leadership and coordination role in establishing best practice and advice for all levels of government. Its legislative provisions allow for it to play a much greater role than has been possible in recent years. | |
| 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? | |
| Historical societies across Australia have active cooperative networks on many levels between themselves (within local government boundaries, through regions, state-wide and national) through the FAHS. They also network widely with other history and heritage groups such as universities, schools, history teachers, genealogists, National Trust, etc.  The FAHS, ACNT and Australia ICOMOS have formally established the **Australian Heritage Partnership** to coordinate their common interests.  The FAHS has proposed the establishment of a Heritage Minister’s Consultation Committee consisting of representatives of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, National Trust and Australia ICOMOS.  **Community Heritage Website/Portal**  This was a very promising initiative and it is pleasing to see that it is supported in the Strategy. Unfortunately, it has had many teething problems and will only be successful if it is appropriately resourced to ensure that it is ‘user friendly’ and is suitably administered.  **Innovative Funding.**  The Heritage sector needs consistent and reliable funding rather than the current ebb and flow as funding streams are turned on and off or are diverted. The recent abolition of the GVESHO scheme is a prime example. The Community Heritage and Icons Programme is very welcome but is more narrow in its focus and funding.  Among the most significant measures of which we are aware for funding heritage projects are the British National Lottery and Lottery West in Western Australia. These raise large sums of money that can then be pumped into a variety of community projects including heritage. We strongly urge the Australian government to examine how such a national lottery scheme may be established in Australia. | |
| 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? | |
| **Australian Heritage Week and an Australian Celebration Day**  The FAHS supports the initiative of an earlier government in establishing an Australian Heritage Week as a means of focussing public attention on heritage and as part of public education. However it has been questioned whether holding Heritage Week in April is the best time. There has also been a long and unresolved debate about the best date on which Australia Day or an Australian Celebration Day or Australia United Day might be held – one that might get away from the cultural and political overtones of 26 January, 25 April, Reconciliation Day, etc.  It is not easy to find an event/date that might be generally acceptable and uncontroversial, but the FAHS proposes the focusing of Heritage Week around 23 August. This appears to be the first recorded date, in 1804, on which the term ‘Australia’ was written. It was proposed in a letter from Matthew Flinders to Joseph Banks, which accompanied a chart of the Australian coastline that was drawn by Flinders and on which he also used the term ‘Australia’. Flinders wrote:  ‘The propriety of the name Australia or Terra Australis, which I have applied to the whole body of what has generally been called New Holland must be submitted to the approbation of the Admiralty and the learned in geography. It seems to me an inconsistent thing that captain Cook’s New South Wales should be absorbed in the New Holland of the Dutch, and therefore I have reverted to the original name Terra Australis or the Great South Land, by which it was distinguished even by the Dutch ... but as it is required that the whole body should have one general name, since it is now known that it is certainly all one land, so I judge that one more acceptable to all parties and on all accounts cannot be found than that now applied.’  Quoted in Anthony Brown, ‘I call the whole island Australia’: Matthew Flinders and the naming of Australia, *Australian Heritage*, Winter 2009, p. 40  The date recognizes the birth of our nation’s name and its perception as a single entity, is very inclusive of all geographical and national areas and also offers a united identity for the Original Australians. It has no obvious problematic political or other overtones, and there seem to be no other holidays or clashes around it. Further justification and references can be provided if considered worthwhile.  **Education**  Public education in the value of heritage and heritage structures is critical. Our towns and cities are losing their heritage structures at a rapid rate, while the rural landscape is subject to pressures that result in rapid and irreversible change. The achievement, for example, of European countries such as Germany, in establishing sympathetic policies for managing industrial change provide a striking model from which Australia could benefit.  The FAHS supports the National Curriculum which emphasizes Australian History and at lower levels encourages engagement with local history. Historical societies are frequently involved with local schools and the FAHS is preparing a training manual to assist this collaboration.  Tertiary courses to train heritage professionals are few in number and apparently under threat. These need government support. | |
| **Other comments** | |
| The FAHS welcomes this initiative and notes that the draft paper contains many positive proposals. However, the FAHS response is focused mainly on the aspects that we believe would benefit from further attention and development.  **An ‘Australian Heritage Strategy’, a ‘Commonwealth Heritage Strategy’ or a ‘National Heritage Strategy’?**  The FAHS believes that it should be more overtly recognized that this draft paper is essentially confined to addressing the limited and defined matters that are Commonwealth responsibility under the EPBC Act arrangements. It does not set out to address the wider range of heritage issues that are the responsibility of states and local government and which are critical in **Australian** heritage regimes. Australian heritage is much broader than the Commonwealth’s limited purview as examined in this draft.  Indeed, the FAHS recommends the development of a truly ‘National Heritage Strategy’ that sets out a coherent strategy for heritage across the nation at all levels of government – as discussed above.  **What is Heritage?**  Although the FAHS understands that the diagram of Moveable and Immovable Heritage is an attempt at simplification, it nevertheless recommends that a way be sought to include one of the most important elements in Tangible-Moveable Heritage – Document and Manuscript materials including photographic images. These are among the most important parts of our cultural heritage and collections and, while they are not covered by the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 nor are the responsibility of the Heritage Branch, they are fundamental to our memories and stories and should be included in any definition or listing of Australia’s heritage.  Recommendation – insert ‘Documents and images’. | |