



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

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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?

ABOUT BLUE SHIELD AUSTRALIA

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. The name Blue Shield comes from the UNESCO 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which specifies a blue shield as the symbol for marking protected cultural property. Blue Shield is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by disasters of all types. The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) and its affiliated national committees (such as Blue Shield Australia) work together as the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross internationally.

Blue Shield Australia is one of many national committees organised under the mission and objectives of the ICBS. BSA was established in 2005 with the approval and support of ICBS, as a federation of four non-governmental organisations (or 'pillars'), which represent professionals active in the fields of



archives, libraries, monuments and sites, and museums.

The BSA committee comprises representatives from the following Australian peak industry organisations:

- ICA: the International Council on Archives, represented in Australia by the *Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities*
- ICOM: the International Council of Museums, represented in Australia by *ICOM Australia*
- ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites, represented in Australia by *Australia ICOMOS*
- IFLA: the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, represented in Australia by the *Australian Library and Information Association*

These four organisations work together to prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergency situations in case of armed conflict or natural disasters that could affect Australia's cultural heritage.

BSA aims to raise awareness of the value of Australian cultural heritage and the need for its protection against threats of all kinds. In order to achieve this aim, BSA organises an annual national campaign - May Day - which urges cultural heritage organisations around Australia to focus on disaster preparedness and response.

What are the most important things the Australian Government should be doing to offer leadership in heritage?

From the Blue Shield Australia perspective, we see the need for the Australian Government to play a stronger leadership role in disaster preparedness to help protect our nation's cultural heritage. While the Federal Government has limited oversight of galleries, libraries, archives, monuments and museums – much of the responsibility lying with state, territory and local government – there is a critical need for disaster preparedness to be on the national agenda. Preparedness takes many forms, including digitisation, awareness-raising, cross-sector collaboration and capacity building.

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?

We propose that the Australian Heritage Strategy include a section on disaster preparedness, setting out the national agenda for protecting our cultural heritage in the event of natural and manmade disasters. This national agenda would encompass:

- Confirmation of the importance of our cultural heritage and the need to preserve documents, artefacts, artworks, buildings and other items of significant value
- The role and responsibilities of the emergency services and armed forces; national, state/territory and local government, and the cultural agencies and institutions
- Logistics; funding; skills, information and training needs; awareness-raising
- Risk mitigation measures, including digitisation and capacity building for professionals and volunteers.



2. 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?

What partnerships are most needed within the heritage sector?

For effective disaster preparedness, we need cultural agencies and institutions to work together, combining resources; fulfilling training needs and raising awareness of the risks to unique, irreplaceable cultural heritage in the event of a disaster.

We also seek stronger connections between the emergency services, armed forces and cultural institutions. Frontline response officers need to understand the importance of our cultural heritage; to recognise the items of greatest value (in terms of rarity and significance, as well as dollars), and to be trained in ways to minimise damage in the event of a disaster.

What heritage roles and responsibilities should be led by governments, peak heritage organisations or community groups in the 21st century?

All these parties need to be involved in disaster preparedness, but it requires the Australian Government to set the agenda at a national level, which can then cascade down through all three levels of government, the cultural sector, and community heritage groups.

How should resources be shared through heritage partnerships to ensure the greatest return on agreed priorities?

Awareness-raising, digitisation of collections and capacity building (training) for professionals and volunteers, are the three top priorities for disaster preparedness. We can be much more effective in all three areas if government and organisations partner to maximise the reach, while minimising the cost.

Can you provide examples of successful innovative partnerships you or your organisation have established?

In 2012, Blue Shield Australia received funding from the Office for the Arts and the Collections Council of Australia to 'facilitate a series of interactive workshops aimed at building cultural heritage resilience in regional Australia by establishing local disaster networks.' The workshops were to take place in every state and in the Northern Territory – seven workshops in total.



The objectives were to:

- Provide a formal framework and mechanisms for sharing disaster management expertise
- and resources between regional cultural organisations.
- Enhance community-based disaster preparedness and response through the
- development and promotion of local disaster networks.
- Build resilience in regional cultural heritage preservation.

The workshops were to be delivered by 30 June 2012.

Attendees came from museums, art galleries, libraries, heritage buildings, archives, universities, emergency services. They included curators, managers, conservators, heritage advisors, independent consultants, council staff, emergency responders, town planners, municipal emergency officers, librarians, volunteers, and students.

These are sample quotes from the evaluation forms:

"A valuable day. Even though I have been on a collections network group, I learnt a lot and saw a need to keep having meetings."

"I learned a great deal today, some new practical skills and other contacts."

"A great workshop with excellent purpose and hopefully beneficial results."

"It made what seems at first like an overwhelming task achievable with networking across groups/sectors."

"Made me think about how collections etc are vulnerable and not enough is done to save and protect them."

"This was an excellent way to start discussion and invite networking on a vital topic."

"Excellent presentations on a long overdue topic. Looking forward to the next."

Outcomes:

Mandurah, WA

The group was enthusiastic about the idea of a local collaborative network for Peel, initiated by the Mandurah Community Museum, and a regional network along the lines of the Q-Dis model. Expansion of the existing state institution collaborative network was also discussed.

Kadina, SA

The group was keen to pursue a network plan for Copper Coast, actioned by the council.

Oatlands, TAS

Arts Tasmania roving curators agreed to spread the message to 145 community museums. UTAS and the Parliamentary Library were interested in establishing a high level collaborative network. Blue Shield Australia was to follow up the connection with Red Cross. Port Arthur and St Helen's History Room both had the potential to be lead agencies in setting up local networks.

Townsville, QLD

Participants agreed to work on a Townsville collaborative network and the museum development officer would spread the message to 70 small community museums.

Darwin, NT

The morning session prompted attendees to think about how they could use new media to communicate during a disaster. The afternoon session provided an opportunity to review the strategy for DisNT.

"Facilitating discussion for DisNT to branch out and promote."

"Excellent facilitation skills and focus on outcomes"



Wagga Wagga, NSW

There was agreement for all participants to work together to form an enlarged collaborative network in the area, led by council.

Yackandandah, VIC

The potential for disaster planning and collaborative networks to be part of all councils' heritage strategy master plans was identified. There was interest in making disaster collaboration part of the northeast Victoria heritage network agenda. The Ballarat Collections Network representatives felt reinvigorated.

3. 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?

What should the Australian heritage sector be doing to help the Australian community better engage in heritage activities?

Blue Shield Australia organises MayDay annually in May, encouraging the heritage sector to revisit disaster preparedness planning. Limited resources mean that the campaign is limited to professionals working in galleries, libraries, archives, monuments and museums, but with funding, this could be extended to take in community groups and heritage volunteers.

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?

Digitisation of images, artefacts and historical records not only preserves the content in the event of a disaster, it also brings heritage items within the reach of anyone with an internet connection. Trove is a fantastic example of this: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>.

Other comments

Blue Shield Australia would welcome the opportunity for further discussions with the Australian Government about the importance of a strong disaster preparedness thread running through the Australian Heritage Strategy.