



Australian Heritage Strategy
Heritage Branch
Department of the Environment
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to respond to this document.

The Heritage Council of NSW is established under the *Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)* and is a statutory body that includes members of the community, the government, the conservation profession and representatives of organisations such as the National Trust of Australia (NSW). The Heritage Council makes decisions about the care and protection of heritage places and items that have been identified as being significant to the people of NSW. The council also provides advice on heritage matters to the Minister responsible for heritage in NSW and to heritage asset owners. It recommends to the Minister places and objects for listing on the State Heritage Register.

Our formal response is set out on the attached cover sheet, but we would draw your attention to the following high level issues:

1. National Leadership

The Heritage Council of NSW welcomes the Australian Heritage Strategy as an important opportunity to provide leadership and clarity on the role of cultural heritage in Australian life.

1.1. Champion the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development

The single most important thing that the Australian Government could do to offer leadership in heritage is to champion the adoption of a national definition for sustainable development that includes cultural heritage. There is increasing recognition that cultural heritage is the important fourth bottom line element for sustainability and complements economic, environmental and social goals.

1.2. Develop an Australian tentative World Heritage List

In addition to the above, we would see as priority areas for the Commonwealth the preparation of a properly researched Tentative List of potential World Heritage site

nominations that puts places such as the Sydney's Royal National Park, the Queen Victoria Markets and the Cape York Peninsula into an acknowledged robust list.

2. Innovative Partnerships

We welcome greater heritage policy and process alignment across all levels of government and would highlight two key opportunities:

2.1. Federal, State and Local government - A joined-up approach to cultural heritage

The practical actions that we would suggest to improve national heritage leadership would be to provide a suite of robust and evidence-based guidance material that sets consistent standards for managing our finite cultural heritage resources at a national, state and local level, including clear outcomes for and guidance on managing cultural heritage places through the planning system, on standards for heritage protection, on community engagement and on standards for monitoring and periodically evaluating that heritage.

2.2 Innovative partnership with industry on green buildings

Older buildings can make an important and cost effective contribution to cleaner air and cleaner land. Reusing existing buildings reduces waste whilst recognising the embodied energy in existing buildings can make a significant contribution to clean air. We would welcome an innovative partnership between the broader industry professionals and suppliers and heritage bodies to achieve this.

3. Community Engagement

We recognise the importance of supporting and empowering communities to look after heritage and would highlight two opportunities:

3.1. A one-stop-shop data portal for Australian cultural heritage places

A one-stop-shop for cultural heritage data, perhaps along the lines of the atlas of Cultural Australia to match the atlas of Living Australia, would be the single most important opportunity to engage everyone in Australia with their heritage, thereby providing information to assist businesses, reduce red tape and ensure that cultural heritage is protected.

Such information would ensure that cultural heritage sites are identified and taken into account early in the planning process, and thus unnecessary destruction can be avoided. This would provide an innovative partnership with local, State and Commonwealth government in the protection of both our cultural and natural heritage.

3.2. Green Army

We welcome the Green Army commitment to heritage conservation and look forward to finding out more about how this important initiative might deliver outcomes for cultural heritage, including Aboriginal heritage places but also historic sites and buildings, archaeological sites, industrial heritage and other places of cultural significance. We also look forward to finding out more about how this program will enable cultural heritage skills development for young people. We particularly welcome the commitment in the strategy to a heritage quality framework, which could include the need for core conservation skills and knowledge. However, in managing the Green Army program, it will be important to ensure heritage conservation work is appropriately matched to the skills of Green Army teams. This

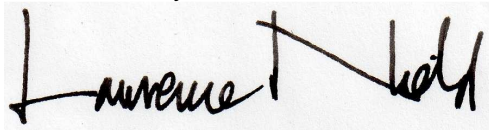
also means recognising the limits of the Green Army model and its application to heritage conservation work – especially complex work that calls for highly specialised trade skills and expertise.

We also note that, while Indigenous heritage is within the scope of the Strategy, there appears to be a general bias for historic (i.e. non-Indigenous) heritage. We feel that, overall, the Strategy could be strengthened by a greater recognition and emphasis on identifying, promoting and celebrating Indigenous heritage places and objects as an important part of Australia's heritage fabric.

Finally one of the biggest challenges for cultural heritage is equity in relation to other kinds of heritage. For example, private owners and businesses are caretakers for the majority of Australia's cultural heritage particularly in the local heritage sector. We would welcome a commitment to more equitable support for cultural heritage places, more in line with the support available for private owners and businesses in relation to natural heritage places. We welcome additional financial support for Port Arthur but would welcome extending support to other cultural World Heritage sites, such as the Australian Convict sites.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment, and we look forward to working closely with you on the future of the Strategy.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence Nield', written over a light-colored rectangular background.

6 June 2014

PROFESSOR LAWRENCE NIELD
Chairman, Heritage Council of NSW



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

Name of Organisation:	Heritage Council of NSW
Name of Author:	Dr Tracey Avery
Date:	6 June 2014

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?

The Heritage Council of NSW welcomes the Australian Heritage Strategy as an important opportunity to provide leadership and clarity on the role of cultural heritage in Australian life.

National leadership in the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development

The single most important thing that the Australian Government could do to offer leadership in heritage is to champion the adoption of a national definition for sustainable development that includes cultural heritage. Our cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible heritage, and includes our Indigenous heritage. Adopting a principle which includes cultural heritage within sustainable development would ensure that cultural heritage is able to take its place beside our natural heritage as an important resource for future generations.



Tentative List

Whilst it is important that there is a representative national list, we would give equal or greater weight to the preparation of a properly researched Tentative List of potential World Heritage site nominations. This would demonstrate clear leadership from the Commonwealth and would contribute to other goals in the strategy that relate to engaging with the international heritage community.

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?

Federal, State and Local government - A joined-up approach to cultural heritage

The practical actions that we would suggest to improve national heritage leadership would be to provide a suite of robust and evidence-based guidance material that sets consistent standards for managing our finite cultural heritage resources at a national, state and local level, including clear outcomes for and guidance on:

- managing cultural heritage through the planning system;
- standards for heritage protection;
- community engagement; and
- standards for monitoring and periodically evaluating that heritage.

Innovative partnership with industry on green buildings

Older buildings can make an important and cost effective contribution to cleaner air and cleaner land. Reusing existing buildings reduces waste whilst recognising the embodied energy in existing buildings can make a significant contribution to clean air. We would welcome an innovative partnership between the broader industry professionals, suppliers and heritage bodies to achieve this.

One-stop-shop streamlining

The Heritage Council supports the proposal to streamline processes to make it easier to navigate heritage regulations (akin to the streamlining that is occurring for environmental assessments and approvals under the 2013 Bilateral Agreement), providing that there is a clear commitment to proper standards and monitoring to ensure that cultural heritage of National and International significance is properly protected, and that matters of national environmental significance including cultural heritage are given proper weight in the planning system.



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?

An Atlas of Cultural Australia

The best way to enable everyone to understand and care for heritage is to utilise current technology and new media to ensure that Australia's International, National, State and Local cultural heritage is mapped to the same standards as our natural heritage counterparts. For example, an atlas of Cultural Australia to match the atlas of Living Australia would be an opportunity to engage everyone in Australia with their heritage, providing information to assist businesses, reduce red tape and ensure that cultural heritage is protected. Such information can ensure that cultural heritage sites are identified and taken into account early in the planning process, and thus unnecessary destruction can be avoided. This would provide an innovative partnership with local, State and Commonwealth government in the protection of both our natural and cultural heritage.

Green Army

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We also look forward to finding out more about how this program will enable cultural heritage skills development for young people. We particularly welcome the commitment in the strategy to a heritage quality framework, which could include the need for core conservation skills and knowledge. However, in managing the Green Army program, it will be important to ensure heritage conservation work is appropriately matched to the skills of Green Army teams. This also means recognising the limits of the Green Army model and its application to heritage conservation work – especially complex work that calls for highly specialised trade skills and expertise.



Other comments

We also note that, while Indigenous heritage is within the scope of the Strategy, there appears to be a general bias for historic (i.e. non-Indigenous) heritage. We feel that, overall, the Strategy could be strengthened by a greater recognition and emphasis on identifying, promoting and celebrating Indigenous heritage places and objects as an important part of Australia's heritage fabric.

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As a general structural comment, the document mixes high level aims with very specific commitments. As a result the commitments sections will need to be updated regularly, and there is relatively little correlation/correspondence between actions and commitments in some instances.

The Heritage Council feels that the document would be greatly improved by separating (into a separate document or at the end) the commitments and proposed actions section for the reasons given above.