



A Strategy for Australia's Heritage

Comment on the Draft Strategy

The Evans Head Living Museum welcomes the opportunity to comment on *A Strategy for Australia's Heritage*.

Background to our community-based museum

Our Museum is a community-based, not-for-profit, voluntary organisation which began operation more than 11 years ago with seed funding for both State and Federal governments under the Community Technology Program.

We would not have been able to start our organisation without that seed funding.

We used the technology section of our organisation to both leverage and support our museum. We continue to maintain both entities. We are self-supporting.

The Museum has seven themes:

1. **World War II history of Evans Head** (see Figure 1) based around the State Heritage Listed Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome. Evans Head was the first of the Empire Air Training Scheme RAAF Stations to be established during World War II. Our Museum has played a seminal role in preservation of the history of the aerodrome including extensive interviews with WWII Veterans who served and trained here, annual Veterans Reunions, exhibitions, commemorative functions attended by the Governor General and her husband, and support functions leading to restoration of the one remaining Bellman Hangar and the procurement of a retired F-111 for display. More than 1,000 RAAF who trained at Evans Head died during the War. We believe Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome should be heritage-listed at the National level. It is worth noting that the State Heritage Listing process attracted the second largest number of letters of support of any State Heritage Listed site in NSW. Many of those killed during WWII served in Bomber Command. We note that a number of the RAAF Personnel who accompanied the Prime Minister to the D-Day ceremonies in France trained at Evans Head.



Figure 1: Top L Passing out parade Evans Head during World War II. Middle- Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome 2005 R Governor General and Husband 2009, 70th Anniversary RAAF at Evans Head. Bottom L Veterans Annual Reunion 2012 Middle Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome in 1941 MovieTone News Story R F-111 exhibition visited by school children from nearby Camp Koinonia which houses many WWII buildings from the RAAF Station

2. **Aboriginal History and Culture** (see Figure 2) is an important part of the history of Evans Head. Not only is the Dirawong Reserve at Evans Head a State Significant site with regard to flora and fauna but most importantly it is a site of major significance to the Bandjalung Nation and particularly the Bandjalang people. One of our first three Museum Patrons was Lawrence Wilson, the Native Title Claimant for the Bandjalang People. His claim was finalised in a Determination Hearing of the Supreme Court held at Evans Head last year on the 2nd of December. The Museum attended and photographed comprehensively the Determination by invitation. The Museum has made representation on behalf of our local First Australians at Australia Day Ceremonies. We have planned an exhibition which tells the story of the Determination which is being curated by one of Lawrence Wilson's sons. And we are planning to repatriate to Evans Head the Isabel McBride collection of artefacts removed from Evans Head workshops and midden sites in the 1960's.



Figure 2: Top L Legal Representatives Aboriginal Community at Dec 2013 Native Title Determination Evans Head Middle Bundjalung Wilson Bros present painting to Supreme Court Judge Jago at Native Title Determination R Group photograph following Determination Bottom L NSW Government Lawyers at Determination were also presented with painting from Native Title Claimants 2nd from L Aboriginal Flag Raising Australia Day 2013 Evans Head 3rd from L Museum President gives invited address on behalf of local Aboriginal people Australia Day 2013 R Traditional Owner Dougie Wilson shows T-shirt printed for the occasion of the Supreme Court Determination of Native Title held at Evans Head 2 December 2013

3. **Natural History and Conservation** (see Figures 3 & 4) Our Museum has an extensive collection of photographs from both Broadwater and Bundjalung National Parks and Dirawong Reserve at Evans Head as well as collections of documents and professional studies relating to conservation issues at and around Evans Head including the controversial Iron Gates residential development and fish kill and bird deaths caused by the dumping of effluent from a council-owned sewerage treatment plant into Broadwater National Park. The Museum has been successful in obtaining grant funding for a successful non-herbicide approach to control of Bitou Bush, a weed of National Significance and product of sand-mining commencing in the 1950's. Pictures taken by the Museum have been used for a number of years as prizes for the National Sustainability Awards for Business. The Museum is also called on frequently to provide history information and advice about a range of development and other matters. We had representation on council's heritage committee during its assessment of all heritage in the local government area, prepared materials for assessment and provided a comprehensive photographic record for the process of identification and listing of sites of heritage value.



Figure 3: L Threatened Pied Oyster Catchers South Beach Evans Head 2nd Left Logo National Sustainability Awards at which Museum pictures used 3rd from L Metamorphosis Prize winning portrait of tadpole changing to frog R Basket Stinkhorn



Figure 4: L One of the stinkhorns from the Genus *Phallus* common to Evans Head Middle Salty Lakes in Broadwater National Park where the local council dumps effluent from the local Sewerage Treatment Plant R Wood Duck in the throes of dying from botulism poisoning in Salty Lakes. The duck is unable to keep its head above water and eventually drowns. The toxicity is the result of the contamination of the lake system and change to pH.

4. **Agriculture** (Figure 5) Evans Head and adjacent areas have been heavily involved in production of sugar and honey for many years. The Museum houses an extensive collection of photographs from the early days of cane growing and sugar milling and also has involvement in the evolution of bee-keeping and medi-honey from Jellybush, a lucrative source of income for local apiarists. The local area contributes heavily to the production and distribution of Queen Bees for export. The area is also involved in the production of teatree oil, beef, dairy and various crops including soy beans, cut flowers, tropical fruit and herbs for various purposes. Our museum is in an ideal position to interpret and display the agricultural area and to sell and promote sample product as a source of income both for us and for local producers.



Figure 5 Top L Beehives on Bundjalung National Park Site at Evans Head. This site is a prolific producer of MediHoney from *Leptospermum* aka "Jellybush" Middle European bees collect honey from flowers of *Xanthorea* or grass tree R final product from hives at Evans Head. Bottom L Broadwater Sugar Mill R Sugar Cane fields at Woodburn during minor flood

5. **Sport** (see Figures 6 & 7)) The Evans Head area has a long and powerful history in sport. Four World Champion Rowers come from here, Snowy Burns, Evans Paddon, Jim Paddon and Jim Saul. The Evans Head Bowling Club is the repository of the magnificent Referees Cup for rowing awarded to Snowy Burns for his many winnings in competitive racing. Woodburn, covered by our Museum is also the home of Australian and International water skiing champions and was a pioneer in the development of water skiing as a sport. Sports events of many kinds are keenly supported at Evans Head with various championships and annual sporting competitions from Bowling to the invitational Long Board surfing competition.



Figure 6: Evans Head has a long history of World Champion Rowers. L Evans Paddon training on the Evans River 2nd L The Referee's Cup of Gold and Silver at the Evans Head Bowling Club 3rd from L Snowy Burns and Jim Paddon, two World Champion Rowers from Evans (L and Middle) Poster from Exhibition 100th Anniversary of the Death of Captain Thomas Paddon showing his World Rowing Champion Jim Paddon, a powerful giant of a man who stood 6'8" tall. The exhibition was prepared for the opening of a new library council office facility at Evans Head by the Museum



Figure 7: Articles selected via Trove and Evans Head Museum Collection of newspapers. Woodburn near Evans Head was one of the pioneers of Water Skiing in Australia. Bill Grenfell, a local policeman, was a major player in introduction of the sport. He built ski boats and water skis and was instrument in the training of water skiers around Australia

6. **Mining** (see Figure 8) Captain Thomas Paddon, the first white settler at Evans Head, was attracted here in the late 1800's because of the presence of alluvial gold on the beaches in the local area. Paddon set off a significant gold rush with many hundreds of miners attracted here including at least 300 Chinese. Chinamen's Beach is named after these miners. Subsequent to the gold mining era Evans Head and surrounds was the subject of sand mining commencing in the 1950's. Thousands of tonnes of mineral sands including ilmenite, rutile, zircon and titanium were taken providing significant earnings for the district but also leaving an environment legacy, Bitou Bush, which we are still dealing with today. The Museum has significant mining records, photographs and taped recordings and has been involved in restoration projects.



Figure 8: Top Sample bags of minerals sands from the AMA mining company Top R Mineral sands on Chinamen's Beach following heavy tides Bottom L Poster from the 100th Anniversary of the death of Captain Thomas Paddon prepared for Richmond Valley Council showing location (bottom right) of beaches mined for mineral sands on the Dirawong Reserve. Bottom Middle Dirawong Reserve Chinamen's Beach showing regrowth after sand-mining and non-herbicide approach to removal of Bitou and Glory Lily R Newspaper report of gold discovery at 'Old Ghostie' Evans Head from our collection

7. **Fishing** (see Figure 9) Scientific oystering was introduced into the Evans River Estuary in the late 1800's by Captain Thomas Paddon. Prior to that Evans Head was a well-known fishing location with many individuals travelling from other locations to fish. Commercial fishing built the wealth of Evans Head particularly with the introduction of prawn trawling in the late 1940's and early fifties. The fleet of 70 trawlers made catches of up to 60,000 lbs a night. Some of the catch was sent overseas. The chairman of the Evans Head Fisherman's Co-op, Jim Saul, AO, subsequently became the chair of the NSW Fish Marketing Authority and it was Jim along with restaurateur Peter Doyle of Watson's Bay fame who pushed for the establishment of the Sydney Fish Markets as they are today. Evans Head fishermen played a major role not only in the marketing of fish product but also in surveying of fishing grounds around the Australia through the Commonwealth-Chartered *Challenge* skippered by Evans Paddon and through the teaching of fishing skills to third world countries around the World. Norm Colless spent many years introducing fisherman from Asia to Africa to newer techniques for fishing. Evans Head figures prominently in the history of fishing and prawning in Australia.

A controversial major fishing competition is held at Evans Head every year. The Museum has an extensive collection of photographs, interviews and records about fishing at Evans Head.

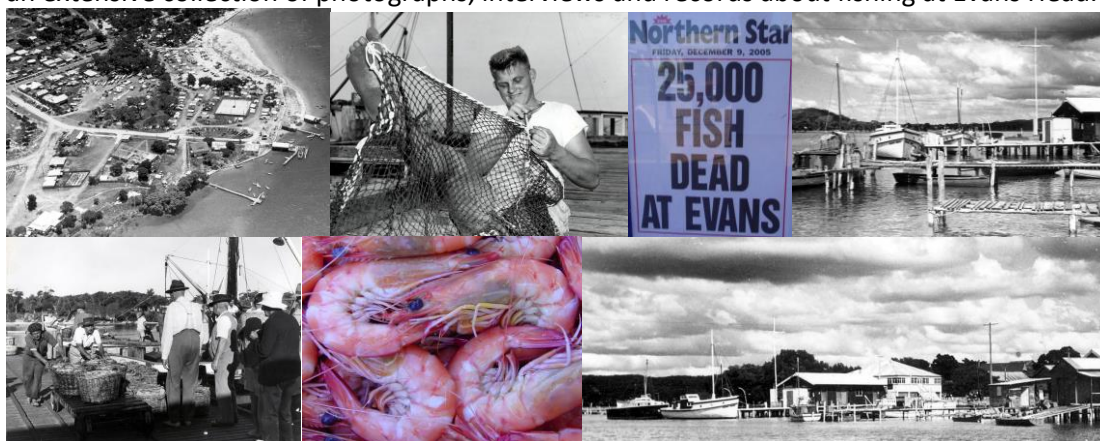


Figure 9: Top L Wharves at Evans Head circa 1940's where fish catches were taken and processed. Only one wharf now remains. 2nd from L local fisherman Col Norton repairs prawn net for prawn trawling. Note the use of the foot for holding the net 3rd from L Promo for Northern Star newspaper about the large fish kill in Salty Lakes in 2005 because of pollution in Salty Lakes from the local sewerage treatment plant. R wharves and fishing boats at Evans Head in the early 1940's Bottom L Bringing in the prawn catch for cooking, cooling and transport to markets. Middle Prawn catch cooked on the boat R Evans Head Wharves during World War II

Comment About the Museum

We have spelled out a little about our Museum so that it can be seen what a small volunteer community-based organisation can do. However we would not have been able to do so without seed-funding from Federal and State governments to get us started.

We continue to be successful in obtaining grant funding but also have to raise significant funds to cover all our overheads including insurance, air-conditioning to maintain our collection in a humid coastal environment, internet connection, office supplies, equipment replacement and so on.

Pitfalls of Private Funding We have looked to private funding for what we do and have had a number of significant private donations to help us with our work particularly from World War II Veterans but there can be a significant pitfall in taking on private funding as often the private funder may want to exert control over the way in which the museum operates and how it does business.

In one arrangement where we provided the necessary museum credentials and expertise we discovered that the private individual wanted a 'Step-In Rights' contract with us so that if there was a financial failure the individual had the right to step in and take control over what we did and our assets.

We received legal advice about this matter and discovered that we would be liable in these circumstances and so had to back away from involvement with the private developer to protect our own interests. We have been successful as an organisation and do not fear for our future while independent, but the step-in rights were such that we could be taken over with little or no requirement for justification by the developer.

We also discovered that the developer wanted to interfere in what we could collect and what we couldn't despite a well-founded collection policy and strategic plan. This betrayed our role as museum manager.

The critical part of this is that we only discovered these problems along the way. There was no early indication that there would be a problem.

We write about this as a warning to others and as input to the *Draft Strategy* so that the issue of private partnerships is fully aired and well-researched before a clear policy is put in place.

It is not possible to canvas all possible outcomes of entering into partnerships but we believe this is an area in which others must have had experience. It is our view that clearly-documented partnership arrangements must be in place from the very beginning and these arrangements must include mechanisms for dispute resolution and clearly defined rules for areas of responsibility.

It is our view that community organisations entering into private arrangements must also be aware of the potential for exploitation from developers who use museums or other agencies for promotion of their own purposes. Sometimes the offer of a significant carrot to the community can blind-sight the organisation so that it finds itself caught up in political and legal issues which it has not contemplated and which are to their detriment.

Exploitation for Political Purposes Community organisations may find themselves caught up in political processes where they are promised certain ‘carrots’ prior to election by expectant politicians and that offer makes it way to the media with endorsement from the organisation for the candidate. It is critical for the community to understand that this is a no-go area fraught with many dangers for their long term survival and particularly their integrity and reputation as an independent agent. Community organisations involved with heritage items need to be fully aware of how easily they can be captured by political process.

This is not to say that there aren’t community donors and benefactors and politicians who do not put their own self-interest first, but private partnerships should be treated from a ‘*caveat emptor*’ perspective and capture for political purposes politely declined.

Amicus Curiae Regarding Private Partnerships It is recommended that the Heritage Strategy develop an *Amicus Curiae* paper and subsequent policy document which provides legal and other advice for community organisations contemplating a private partnership. The person or organisation preparing the *Amicus* should preferably be an academic with no particular free market or other political/economic ideology driving their advice.

Importance of Building Powerful Relationships Our museum has entered into a number of successful partnerships with many organisations to achieve particular goals. Some of these have been once only while others are ongoing. The importance of building a powerful relationship with the wider community must not be underestimated in order to be effective.

Where we need support The Museum has been offered an old and very large Queenslander in good condition to house its collection and provide exhibition space. However the offer is contingent on us moving the house to another site. The donor has offered to assist in moving the house but we will have to obtain other forms of help to achieve our goal. It is this kind of major project which may need some external assistance to achieve outcome although it is not yet fully clear from our scoping study what forms of assistance that might be at this stage. We see here an opportunity for the **Green Army** to help renovate the building once it is moved to the new site. The renovation process provides an opportunity for ‘hands on’ experience for development of building-related skills, design, engineering, administration with various agencies to achieve approvals, and so on.

Engagement of Indigenous Community Our contact with the Aboriginal Community tells us that many young Aboriginal people find it difficult and frustrating to find work. Some of this frustration seems to be related to racism. “As soon as they see I am a blackfella that’s the end of it”.



Because we have a good relationship with the Aboriginal Community we see ourselves being well-placed to engage Aboriginal people at a number of levels for our work. We would be happy to elaborate.

At present an ILUA is being developed for the recently concluded Aboriginal Native Title Claim (see earlier). A well-defined heritage strategy would be very helpful in developing that ILUA for the mutual benefit of Aboriginal people and for others. Our museum is well placed to be involved in grass roots reconciliation processes through various projects which would provide skills and a sense of engagement with projects that matter for them.

The biggest impediment to achieving some of the goals outlined here is the **lack of capacity on our part for supervision of projects**. We are a volunteer organisation. It would be very useful to us and the community if funds were made available for supervision of various projects particularly those involving hands on work where safety, work volume and skill development are critical.

We are currently in discussion with the State Significant Dirawong Trust with whom we have an effective working relationship about potential employment of the **Green Army** for Bitou work on the Reserve and movement of the offered Queenslander to a site on or near the Reserve as an Interpretive Centre. We share six of our seven themes in common with the Dirawong: World War II history, Aboriginal History and Culture, Natural History and Conservation, Sand Mining, Fishing and Recreational Sport.

Opportunity for Synergy The opportunity for significant synergy for tourism including cultural tourism with Aboriginal interpretation experience is also very clear.

National Landscapes Program

We note the *National Landscapes Program* and would like to put the proposition that the Evans Head area be considered for inclusion in such a program because of the breadth and depth of our history.

Our seven themes cover a wide range of topics suitable for tourism development including cultural experiences which we note attract a significant financial benefit to the community. The potential is there via the State Heritage Aerodrome for aviation charter groups.

The main issue as we see it is development and coordination of all the resources which are available for development. This is quite a big undertaking and must include careful thought about making sure that the area is not 'loved to death' as is happening at iconic Byron Bay.

Evans Head has the potential to be a high end destination with high quality experiences with appropriate development and marketing.

Sadly, local government has a mainstream approach to development which will ultimately destroy our uniqueness. If we are not careful the area will become just like many of the other 'blah' coastal locations which many now try to avoid when experiencing Australia. We wish to maintain that uniqueness and believe that an integrated heritage strategy might be a very successful way to do that while dealing with some of our economic and social problems at the same time.

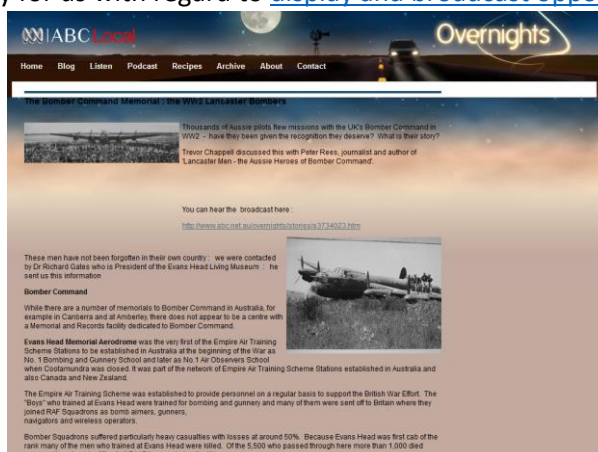
Our local government area Richmond Valley is one of the most socially-disadvantaged areas in NSW and Australia with nearly 20% living below the poverty line and more than 40% experiencing rental distress, and so on (see NATSEM stats from Canberra University).

It is our view that the vision is there for appropriate and sustainable development and a well-thought-out heritage strategy could serve us well to achieve that vision.

Direct Comments on the 3 Themes in the Draft Heritage Strategy:

1. The Australian government should consider adding some areas such as Evans Head to the *Landscapes Program* along well-defined guidelines which move beyond large iconic landscapes. We believe that areas which are rich from so many perspective should become part of that Program. This will provide the necessary impetus to do things which formal status can bring through recognition. Strict criteria will need to be put in place so that we are not swamped with second rate proposals. We believe Evans Head should be part of any representative National Heritage List as it not only speaks to place through its State Heritage Listed aerodrome and State Significant Dirawong Reserve but also covers many strands of Australian cultural and social history including that of First Nation peoples. Listing at this level would improve chances for development of Indigenous skills and employment opportunities for young people.
2. In order to employ the **Green Army** supervisory support is needed as it is too much of an ask for a voluntary organisation to manage such an army. This would enhance our capacity to be able to do things for the longer term and build capacity to take on additional projects.
3. A Federal Strategy must also provide good advice about the risks associated with partnerships with commercial interest. An organisation may be very good at the management of heritage but lousy when it comes to protecting their own interest in private partnerships where exploitation may occur.
4. There is potential for excellent partnerships with some government agencies. A Federal Strategy might look to Defence for assistance with some engineering projects to give their own staff experience and build relationships with the community. In the case of Evans Head we have had a long and positive connection with the RAAF for more than seventy years. This could be further developed for mutual benefit. Clear policy development in this area is required.
5. Capacity building through provision of skills programs for volunteers. We would encourage a Federal Strategy to examine potential sources of funding or in-kind mechanisms to build capacity in volunteers. Funds are clearly short in this domain. We had two of our volunteers attend the annual Museums and Galleries conference this year but both were significantly out of pocket in doing so and we don't have the resources to support them. Finances are a significant impediment to capacity building.

On the other hand we note that the ABC through its OPEN program has provided significant and valuable capacity for us with regard to [display and broadcast opportunities](#), part of



getting our story across to the public. We are deeply concerned that the availability of this capacity-building will be lost because of the cuts to the ABC through the Lewis Efficiency Review. We note already that regional broadcasting is being slowly whittled away. We would ask that the Heritage Strategy make strong recommendations about preservation of ABC budget so that we can continue to use this valuable agency for [capacity building](#) for our heritage.

6. We ask that we be given better guidance/advice with regard to National Heritage Listing. We like the notion of a 'one stop shop' here.

Overall we commend the development of a coherent National Heritage Strategy and recommend that the National government take a strong leadership role in providing the necessary environment for preservation of our heritage. We push for a national strategy as in our experience local government has little expertise and capacity to provide the necessary leadership role. Too often local government sees little or no value in what it has from a heritage perspective beyond realisation of the family silver, that is sale of heritage items to cover budgetary problems. We have witnessed the loss of a number of major heritage items which had great tourism potential because of cultural blindness, parochialism and political interference. This problem is not just isolated to Australia.

Care needs to be taken in subscription to 'market place' ideology in forming opinion and making decisions with regard to heritage. It does not always provide the best outcome at a national level and may lead to lowest common denominator outcomes. In many ways it sets up National Heritage for 'Tragedy of the Commons' exploitation of our national treasures, the things we value most.

Care must also be taken in using 'benchmarks' and 'best practice' approaches to **management** of heritage as there is a literature which shows that the organisations which do best often bear little resemblance or conformity to established benchmarks and practices. This is not to say that best practice should not be used in treatment of the heritage items themselves.

We are happy to discuss our submission.

Yours sincerely



Dr Richard Gates

President & Life Member