




AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY

Overview

This template should be used to provide comments on the content of the Australian Heritage Strategy.

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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?

This draft strategy encompasses the important World Heritage Areas located in Australia, with the Australian Government (in collaboration with states and territories) being responsible for looking after the outstanding universal value of these. As such, the Australian Government should:

- Develop a much more comprehensive and robust strategy. Commitments under this section of the draft strategy include 'explore' and 'encourage', for example. This is totally inadequate under commitments for national leadership. Leadership should define positive actions.
- Retain and build on a strong legislative framework underpinning the protection of heritage, to be overseen by the Australian Government (in collaboration with states and territories). These regulations must not be focussed on development assessment processes or approvals, but rather on, for example, protecting the outstanding universal value of World Heritage Properties. Primary regulatory powers should not be devolved to states or territories, such as current examples in



Queensland under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

- The commitment to, and involvement of Traditional Owners in the decision making process and management of natural, historic and cultural heritage values should be clearly defined and articulated in the strategy and supported through positive commitments. Consent needs to be incorporated in this.
- National leadership needs to be taken with regard to advancing a World Heritage nomination for Cape York Peninsula that places Traditional Owner engagement and consent at the front of the process. Steps taken by the Commonwealth Government over the last five years regarding Cape York engagement need to be continued.
- A reference in the strategy to “lessons learnt from the Great Barrier Reef strategic assessment” is meaningless, as the lessons learnt have not been stated.
- Actions to “explore innovative approaches to fund the long term protection” is an inadequate commitment, particularly with regard to references in the draft strategy to crowd-funding, the Green Army as a tool for conservation, web-based tools and tourism. This does not reflect the Australian Government’s commitment to heritage protection such as under the World Heritage Convention. Strong leadership of national heritage must be supported by clear funding commitments.

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?

- The priority of partnerships should be focussed on regional community groups that know and understand their natural, cultural and historic heritage, rather than looking at crowd funding, tourism and the Green Army as partnerships and opportunities. Certainly, young people need to be involved at the ground level, but experience in heritage conservation comes through the support of regionally based groups, advisory committees and boards.
- Tourism in heritage conservation is important in education and conservation. However, it should not be a driving force (as part of a push for development) to be a partner in national heritage conservation.
- With respect to the draft strategy being a broad overarching document, references to promotion on web sites and crowd funding are totally inappropriate. These are operational issues of any strategy and need to be developed in a more considered approach rather than ideas in a strategy.

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?

- The first question in this section may be somewhat insulting to many. Regional communities already understand and care about their heritage and are currently very concerned about their conservation. Leadership by the Australian Government needs to be in the areas of listening to advice provided by regional groups and advisory committees and by providing financial support for implementation of appropriate management actions.
- The caring and understanding by the wider Australian community of heritage values is required through:
 - strong Australian Government leadership and commitment to conservation of heritage by setting high level conservation priorities, appropriate regulation and appropriate funding; and
 - a coordinated education program aimed at the general public, that is drawn from the large volume of understanding, information and expertise in the protection and conservation of heritage, already available and also held within regional communities.
- Tourism can and should play a strong part in promotion and education aimed at conserving heritage values.
- Involvement of students/youth in caring for the environment should be a key partnership approach, such as the Reef Guardians project. They are the future stewards of natural, cultural and historic heritage values.

Other comments

- The draft strategy is a totally inadequate approach to management of heritage particularly as it includes World Heritage Areas.
- Navigation of regulatory processes under a “one stop shop” approach (page 8 and other) should not be part of a strategy for conservation of important heritage. This refers to development approval processes.
- It needs to be clearly articulated that not the Australian Government, or state or territory governments, or taxpayers, own World Heritage areas. Australia has been tasked with stewardship of these, in collaboration with other levels of government and the community, under the World Heritage Convention for current and future generations.