Australian Heritage Strategy Submissions 14 June 2014

Heritage Branch

Department of the Environment

GPO Box 787

Canberra ACT 2601

**COMMMENT ON THE DRAFT AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY**

The Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations (AFFHO)is the umbrella organisation for family history societies in Australia and New Zealand. It was established in 1978 to coordinate and assist the work of Australian and New Zealand groups with interests in family history, genealogy, heraldry and related subjects.

Family history societies and their members have a very strong interest in heritage issues and contribute to the protection of sites including, but not restricted to, cemeteries, memorials, and historical sites.

There are a number of elements within the Draft Strategy which could be enhanced by broader definition to specifically include, for example, cemeteries and by recognition of the family history and genealogy community within the definition of ‘Australia’s heritage community’.

Cemeteries do not appear to sit comfortably within the heritage framework described under “What is Heritage” and yet they hold information which “tell[s] important stories about us and our world”. This is particularly so in the case of pioneer cemeteries; those in isolated parts of Australia; and those which contain the graves of Australia’s service men and women. But even contemporary cemeteries are an important part of Australia’s heritage.

Those of us in the family history community who have spent many hours transcribing headstones see how quickly these are damaged or destroyed and the information held on them may then be lost forever.

Australia’s heritage community, as listed in the draft strategy, includes many key community groups and organisations but does not include any reference to the family history and genealogy community. This is quite a serious omission as family history groups, throughout Australia, have a very keen interest in preserving Australia’s heritage and stories. The work that is done on cemetery transcriptions is just one example of how family history societies work, in very practical ways, to preserve our heritage, record significant information and publish this to the benefit of all. Without this work, so much would be lost.

The Australian Federation of Family History Organisations supports the aims of the Draft Strategy and would very much appreciate being involved in its future.

Kind regards



Kerrie Gray

President

Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations.