# 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:** | Kimberley Foundation Australia (KFA) |
| **Name of Author:** | **Cas Bennetto** |
| **Date:** | **24 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? | |
| * Acknowledge rock art as part of Australia’s Indigenous heritage and include it in the strategy. * Acknowledge Kimberley rock art as nationally significant and possibly the oldest rock art in the world – and therefore of international significance. * Enable leadership within conservation and environment bodies to foster support for and encourage research and protection of rock art. * Priority areas for KFA include cultural mapping and recording of Kimberley rock art with the Aboriginal communities; ultimately cultural mapping and recording of all of top end art; and dating the rock art. * Include representation from a non-profit organisation such as KFA to any leadership group, where we can add value and our experience working across sectors (private, industry, philanthropic, government, remote Aboriginal communities and leadership Indigenous organisations). | |
| 1. **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? | |
| * With regard to Indigenous heritage in the Kimberley, partnerships with tourism nationally are essential to building infrastructure and a long-term tourism strategy both domestically and internationally. * KFA has established an innovative partnership with INPEX Corporation, an international oil and gas exploration and production company. With the help of INPEX we have established a Chair in perpetuity in Kimberley rock art at the University of Western Australia. * A partnership with The Ian Potter Foundation has enabled KFA to initiate a new era of archaeological research in the Kimberley. * A partnership with the Freedman Foundation has enabled KFA to initiate a rock art recording and cultural mapping program with remote Aboriginal communities in the NW Kimberley and to develop course materials on the ipad. | |
| 1. **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? | |
| * A shared understanding of our national heritage can developed with Education in Schools program that includes a focus on rock art at primary and secondary school level. The significance of Aboriginal heritage in the rock art – perhaps the most significant Indigenous cultural heritage in Australia – should be imparted, taught and celebrated at school. This would overcome much of the growing disengagement; it would empower aboriginal and non-aboriginal people to appreciate and understand rock art and ultimately celebrate it as part of Australia’s heritage. * KFA has a national mandate to promote Kimberley rock art and we have presented 12 public dissemination/engagement events over the past 4 years. We present an annual public lecture in 3 cities (Perth, Sydney and Melbourne) promoting the value and significance of the remarkable rock art legacy we have been left to protect. * The role of technology and new media in providing greater community access to heritage is profound. It must start with the younger generation; using digital media (ipads etc) is possibly the only way they stay engaged and interested. KFA has pioneered rock art recording and cataloguing on the ipad and is sharing its method of pairing both scientific and traditional knowledge with interested groups. | |
| **Other comments** | |
| Most of the current emphasis regarding heritage in the landscape is on biodiversity management (flora and fauna) without emphasis on cultural heritage, and even less emphasis on Indigenous cultural heritage.  Kimberley rock art is at risk. There is no cultural heritage conservation plan. There is no science-based research on rock art conservation. Scientists think it is probably the oldest rock art in the world. KFA has initiated a research program to date the rock art (using a number of established techniques); this is critical to the protection of Australia’s unique cultural heritage. Investment in world-class research is important.  Collaboration with indigenous communities and working together on preservation strategies and recording the rock art is essential. It cannot be an Indigenous-only zone with regard to protection and access. Building community capacity and the infrastructure for sustainable and positive outcomes is critical.  The rock art belongs to all of Australia. It is part of the Australian settlement story. Rock paintings can provide information about how and when people arrived, about the environment at the time, how they lived and adjusted to changing climatic conditions and something of their beliefs. For quality and quantity, stylistic variation and clear sequences over time, Kimberley rock art is peerless.  Critical to protecting the rock art is to know more about it. Understanding what it can tell us is the key to its protection. The more we can share that information, the more people will appreciate its uniqueness, ensuring it is preserved so that future generations don’t just read about it – but can see it. | |