



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,  
Water, Population and Communities



# Australian Heritage Strategy

Public Consultation Paper – April 2012



# AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE STRATEGY

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### About the Australian Heritage Strategy

The Australian Government is seeking public input to help develop a new strategy for the identification, management and celebration of Australia's heritage.

Communities, individuals and governments at all levels are invited to make submissions to help set positive directions for heritage conservation and management. Your submission will help guide the development of the strategy and ensure the Australian Heritage Strategy reflects the views and ideas of Australians.

The Australian Heritage Strategy will outline priorities for Australia's heritage over the next decade. It will be a high level document that sets directions for the Australian community and governments, and will be informed by heritage guidelines, policies and other documents produced by government and non-government organisations. It will be developed with expert input from the Australian Heritage Council, state and territory heritage agencies, Indigenous organisations, representatives of conservation organisations and public input resulting from this process. Prior to completion, a draft version of the strategy will be considered by Heritage Ministers, representing each jurisdiction responsible for heritage management in Australia.

As part of the development of the strategy, the Australian Government began consulting state and territory heritage agencies and organisations during 2011. In addition, a series of nine essays have been developed by expert authors to explore issues and themes in Australian heritage policy.

These essays are published at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage).

Public consultation is the next step in the development of the strategy. This paper is intended as a 'thought starter' for people and organisations interested in contributing. Drawing on the commissioned essays, it outlines some of the current challenges and opportunities for heritage in Australia, with the aim of stimulating ideas and debate about the best way forward. A series of questions provide prompts that may help structure a submission.



## To make a submission:

**Step 1:** Read this discussion paper

**Step 2:** Complete a coversheet from  
[www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/pubs/cover-sheet.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/pubs/cover-sheet.pdf)

A coversheet containing your personal information and agreements regarding copyright and confidentiality must accompany your submission.

**Step 3:** Lodge your submission

Submissions, or selected extracts from submissions, may be published in full on the department's website or reproduced in public documents unless marked 'confidential'. Read the Submission guidelines in full at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/submissions.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/submissions.html).

**Via email:** [Australianheritagestrategy@environment.gov.au](mailto:Australianheritagestrategy@environment.gov.au)

**Via mail:** Australian Heritage Strategy Project Team  
Heritage Strategies  
Heritage and Wildlife Division  
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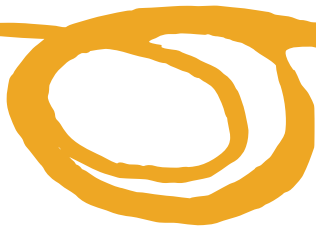
**Submissions should be received by 15 June 2012.**

## Heritage in Australia – Important Concepts

The development of the Australian Heritage Strategy recognises that heritage is important to all Australians and continues to shape and influence our identity.

### What is heritage?

Australia has a rich natural and cultural heritage that underpins our sense of place and national identity. Heritage includes stories, traditions, languages, events and experiences inherited from the past; it comprises both natural and cultural places with tangible and intangible values. More than a legacy from our past, heritage is also a living, integral part of life today that is constantly renewed and refreshed. Shaped by nature and history, it gives context to where we are now and where we are headed as a community.



By protecting our heritage we conserve valuable community assets and ensure that those stories, places and traditions can continue to be experienced and enjoyed by future generations.

## Australia's heritage system

From the creation of the Australian National Trust movement in 1945 to the signing of UNESCO's *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage* in 1972 and the creation of the Australian Heritage Commission in 1975, significant milestones have been achieved in the protection of Australia's heritage. Clarifying federal, state and local government responsibilities for heritage in the 1990s by the Council of Australian Governments was particularly important. At the national level this culminated in the introduction of the *Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and the establishment of the National Heritage List in 2004, currently protecting 97 natural, Indigenous and historic places. Over this period, state and territory governments have also developed and updated their heritage legislation, made extensive registers and inventories of heritage places, protected significant areas of national park and reserve and provided programs of support to the community. Local governments have embraced heritage protection and celebration. The use of town planning instruments has resulted in many thousands of properties being covered by statutory protection, with communities using those provisions to enhance their role to develop better environments.

Individuals, community groups, businesses and non-government organisations also continue to play an important role in heritage identification, management and celebration. In particular, building owners and developers manage and preserve built heritage, demonstrating commitment to heritage values and contributing significant expenditure.

## Heritage report card – Australia state of the environment 2011 report

Published in December 2011, the *Australia state of the environment 2011* report provides insight into the current condition of our environment and its outlook. Covering a diverse range of issues and topics, the report is a big-picture view of what Australia's doing right, what we could do better, and what more we need to know to target our management responses.

For heritage, the report shows that while the current condition and integrity of Australia's listed heritage appears to be good, some deterioration is evident over recent years. Climate change, development and population pressures are the biggest threats to heritage, and there is scope to add more sites to the lists of protected natural and cultural places so that they are truly representative. The report also draws attention to Indigenous cultural heritage management and protection, particularly the way that individual assessment and development applications are causing incremental destruction of irreplaceable cultural resources.





The report concludes that the future for Australia's heritage will depend on government leadership in two areas: 1) ensuring adequate areas of protected land and comprehensive heritage inventories, and 2) changing heritage management paradigms and resource allocation in response to emerging threats. There is also a need for a clearer picture on the nature and extent of Indigenous cultural heritage.

## Key Issues

The following issues and concepts come from a series of specially commissioned essays, which are available online [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html).

To stimulate thinking and assist in the development of the structure of each submission, a summary of key heritage issues followed by a number of questions relating to each issue is provided below.

## Recognising and valuing Australia's heritage

Scope exists to improve the Australian community's understanding and appreciation of heritage. A survey undertaken by Deakin University showed that many Australians regret that they do not know enough about their own cultural heritage or that of others, and that they are keen to learn more about the past, particularly in relation to Indigenous Australians and minority communities.

*One of the saddest things revealed by the Deakin survey was that many Australians regret that they do not know enough about their own cultural heritage or that of others. People were almost embarrassed to discuss heritage, fearing that they would seem ignorant. But there is also a hunger to learn more about the past, and particularly that of Indigenous Australians and also minority communities (Kate Clark 'Only Connect' – The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits).*

The same survey, however, also showed that over 80 per cent of people were involved in at least one heritage-related activity in the course of a year and the majority undertook two or more in the course of a year. Visiting heritage sites and making use of heritage related media is widespread in the Australian community (Heath McDonald *What are the Community Expectations for Heritage Protection?*).

Heritage management can be expensive, both to the public purse and for property owners. In his article Bruce Leaver suggests that costs are associated with restoring and conserving the values of a place and the economic opportunities foregone. While tourism is worth over \$90 billion to the Australian economy, and provides over 4.7% of total employment, quantifying the economic



benefits of heritage tourism can be difficult (Bruce Leaver *Delivering the Social and Economic Benefits of Heritage Tourism*).

Nevertheless, the value of heritage exceeds its potential to generate income from tourism. While this is difficult to quantify, the economist David Throsby discusses heritage as 'cultural capital'. Like natural capital it is something we have inherited; it provides a system that supports human cultural endeavour and an important element of cultural diversity. Protecting and investing in cultural capital can produce social, economic or environmental returns, whilst eroding or 'spending' it diminishes the ability of future generations to do so (Kate Clark 'Only Connect' – *The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits*).

In relation to privately owned heritage sites, the cost of public benefit can be carried by individuals. This issue was highlighted in the 2006 Productivity Commission Report into the conservation of historic heritage.

*For many historic heritage places, contemporary use and enjoyment, and ongoing adaptation and development by the owners (government and non-government (private)) are compatible with and provide sufficient incentives for the continued conservation of their cultural values. However, for some places conservation of their heritage significance necessarily involves costs to individuals and the community... where the places are government-owned, governments, as representatives of their communities, can directly consider such costs and weigh them against the cultural benefits conservation of the places provides to their communities. Where places are privately-owned, the owners have limited ability to capture the wider community benefits of conservation (Productivity Commission).*

### Questions for discussion:

- What is the community's understanding of heritage?
- What is the social, economic and environmental value of heritage?
- What are the potential benefits to the economy, community and the environment from heritage?
- How can heritage provide opportunities and benefits for urban and regional development?

## Leadership

Australian heritage places are managed by various levels of government and peak bodies that identify and list places for their heritage values. Significant heritage places are identified and grouped—by type—into lists that guide the protection and management of heritage values.



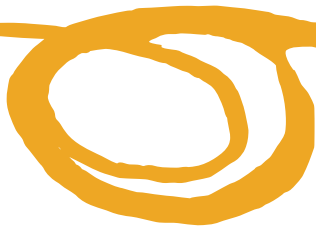
The Australian Government plays a high level role in the management of world and national heritage places and has direct responsibility for Commonwealth heritage. The *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) established the National Heritage List, a list of natural, Indigenous and historic places that are of outstanding heritage value to the nation, and provides protection for world and national heritage values as matters of national environmental significance. Australia's state and territory governments maintain lists or registers of heritage places that have particular importance to the people who reside there. This cooperative national approach to heritage management was formalised in 1992 with the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment.

The sharing of responsibility between three levels of government, while not peculiar to heritage, can create confusion within the community, and many believe leadership by the Federal government remains essential.

*Because of the structure of Australian government, Federal leadership on heritage issues is essential, whether on data, policy, legislation or operations; but that leadership means in turn building capacity at all levels. The majority of cultural heritage assets, including museums, are the responsibility of local government – the tier of government least well resourced to care for them. The local authority responses to the Productivity Commission revealed an overarching message that local government was committed to heritage conservation however faced issues with inadequate resourcing (Kate Clark 'Only Connect' – The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits).*

Nonetheless, there exists the opportunity for all governments (including state and local government) to provide the community with leadership in heritage conservation and support the ongoing work of the private and not-for-profit sector while also ensuring consistency of approach.

Australia has played an important international role in heritage matters. The Australian developed Burra Charter is acknowledged as a most significant document guiding heritage practice and policy in many countries, and we are an acknowledged leader in World Heritage management. Australia has also been a prominent member of the World Heritage Committee. Recently, we have given strong support to Pacific nations in their engagement with the World Heritage system and processes. Non-government organisations such as the Australian arm of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Australian Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have consistently played leading roles in international heritage fora.



### Questions for discussion:

- What is the expected role of government in heritage?
- Who should be providing leadership in heritage in Australia?
- Are the different responsibilities of the Australian, state/territory and local governments clear? Is there any duplication?
- Are the heritage legislative mechanisms across Australian jurisdictions understood? If not, how can we address this?
- What is Australia's role in heritage internationally and who should be contributing to this activity?

## Community participation

It is important that all Australians have the capacity to commemorate, celebrate, access and engage in their heritage. Celebrating heritage contributes to national identity and social cohesion, and is often at the heart of community distinctiveness. It is also important to promote and provide accessible information about heritage places and objects – this is critical in creating an environment in which heritage is valued, managed and celebrated.

Celebrations – from neighbourhood festivals, annual events such as the Darwin beer can regatta, to Heritage Week – also generate support for further heritage conservation. Susan Tonkin believes support for local festivals is crucial in generating greater understanding of heritage.

*Support of heritage festivals, local histories, oral histories, family histories, storytelling and tours should be enhanced in recognition of the fact that personal or local connection is the key to community interest and a broader understanding of heritage (Susan Tonkin What is Heritage?).*

### Questions for discussion:

- What is the expected role of the broader community in heritage?
- Who is currently involved in protecting, managing or commemorating heritage in Australia?
- How can more people be engaged with Australia's heritage and involved in heritage activities?
- How can we engage younger generations with Australia's heritage?







## Networks and partnerships

Private and non-government heritage conservation efforts have developed considerably in recent years. In the cultural environment, Indigenous communities are playing an important role in the identification and management of Indigenous heritage and private owners are investing significant amounts of money into the conservation of historic buildings. Natural conservation organisations such as Bush Heritage and the Australian Nature Conservancy are dedicating considerable energy and resources to natural heritage conservation. Collectively, the Australian National Trust owns or manages over 300 heritage places (the majority held in perpetuity), manages a volunteer workforce of 7000 and employs about 350 people nationwide. While governments assist in these efforts, opportunities also exist for partnerships between governments and non-government bodies. There is scope to continue to explore financial incentives, as well as better capture philanthropic, community engagement and volunteer support.

In her article Kate Clark suggests that perhaps the greatest opportunities for advancing heritage strategies and agendas lie in linking heritage to other public agendas, be it health and welfare, sustainability, science or economics.

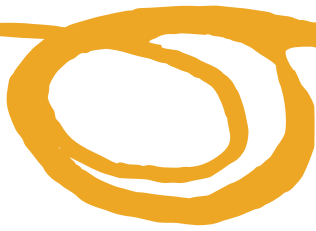
*It is vital to ensure that the roles and guidance from other agencies involved in health, environmental regulation and social policy for example, explicitly recognise the contribution that heritage can make to their core outcomes (Kate Clark 'Only Connect' – The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits).*

### Questions for discussion:

- What is the role of the private sector and non-government organisations in heritage?
- What policy instruments would best support the management of privately owned heritage sites?
- What connections should be made with other disciplines or areas of government policy?

## Protecting and managing heritage

Although Australia has a range of well-resolved processes for the identification, protection and management of our heritage, the *Australia state of the environment 2011* report found that our heritage is under resourced and that management systems can be cumbersome. More flexible approaches and better resourcing are needed to support conservation (State of the Environment 2011 Committee).



Much of the heritage conservation effort across Australia is currently focussed on legislative and regulatory mechanisms. While most jurisdictions operate within similar and sound heritage conservation frameworks, there are some differences of approach that create confusion. In addition, the focus on regulatory mechanisms can detract from or hinder the recognition and celebration of heritage. In many cases Australia's heritage includes Indigenous, post-contact and natural values that often co-exist in one location and which have in the past and present shaped the communities living in that place – yet this is not well reflected in legislative or management arrangements.

Assistance for heritage protection from governments can be through financial assistance (to communities or individuals), or the provision of advice. Advice, self-help programs and other indirect assistance have been successful and warrant careful consideration. Some work has been undertaken on a national level to identify a way forward with education and training. The recent completion of the *Heritage Trades and Professional Training Project* is one example of real progress in this sphere.

The voluntary sector is also a crucial resource for Australia's heritage.

*There are of course the many passionate private individuals who care for heritage assets such as historic vessels, cars and machinery, or the owners who cherish their historic buildings and landscapes. There are the members of local history and heritage societies, the thousands of volunteers who give the time and the hundreds of 'friends' groups who band together to support museums, national parks, and other sites. There are also individuals with special skills and knowledge—the speakers of Indigenous languages, the holders of cultural knowledge and traditions, and the craftsmen who pass on the skills needed to repair old buildings or recreate Aboriginal technology (Kate Clark 'Only Connect' – The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits).*

### Questions for discussion:

- Are the current models of assistance effective, well directed or adequate for the task ahead?
- Is there a consistent promotion of heritage best practice in Australia?
- Are lists and reserved lands the best way to manage heritage – and if so, are they adequate?
- How can heritage identification, management and celebration be supported most effectively in Australia?
- Are there adequate resources to support heritage best practice, including availability of professional heritage trades and training?
- What groups or organisations would benefit most from support or assistance?



## Further Reading

Bell, Damein and Elley, Joy (2011) *Whose Heritage?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

Clark, Kate (2011) *'Only Connect' – The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

Garden, Don (2011) *Who are the Players in Heritage and What Roles do they Play?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

Johnston, Chris (2011) *What are the Community Expectations for Heritage Protection?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

Leaver, Bruce (2011) *Delivering the Social and Economic Benefits of Heritage Tourism?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

McDonald, Heath (2011) *What are the Community Expectations for Heritage Protection?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

Productivity Commission 2006, *Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places*, Report No. 37, Canberra.

Schmider, Joann and James, Peter (2011) *Whose Heritage is it?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

Spearritt, Peter (2011) *What is Heritage?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)

State of the Environment 2011 Committee *Australia state of the environment 2011 – in brief. Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities*. Canberra: DSEWPaC, 2011. Available at [www.environment.gov.au/soe/2011/summary/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/soe/2011/summary/index.html)

State of the Environment 2011 Committee *Australia state of the environment 2011. Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities*. Canberra: DSEWPaC, 2011. Available at [www.environment.gov.au/soe/2011/report/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/soe/2011/report/index.html)

Tonkin, Susan (2011) *What is Heritage?* Essay available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/documents.html)



## State and Territory Resources

### Australian Capital Territory

[www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage](http://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage)

### New South Wales

New South Wales Government (2000) NSW Government Heritage Policy: Heritage Week Directions Statement. Available online at [www.heritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au)

Heritage Council of NSW Strategic Plan 2010-2011. Available online at [www.heritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au)

### Northern Territory

[www.nretas.nt.gov.au/knowledge-and-history/heritage](http://www.nretas.nt.gov.au/knowledge-and-history/heritage)

### Queensland

Department of Environment and Resource Management, (2009) Queensland Heritage Strategy: a ten-year plan. Available online at [www.derm.qld.gov.au/heritage/index.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/heritage/index.html)

### South Australia

Department for Environment and Heritage (2003) Heritage Directions: A Future for Built Heritage in South Australia. Available online at [www.environment.sa.gov.au/Heritage/Local\\_government/Heritage\\_directions](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/Heritage/Local_government/Heritage_directions)

### Tasmania

Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment (DTAE) (2007) Managing our heritage position paper. Available on-line at [www.heritage.tas.gov.au/act\\_reform.html](http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au/act_reform.html)

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) (2011) Streamlining the management of historic heritage (Fact Sheet). Available on-line at [www.heritage.tas.gov.au/act\\_reform.html](http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au/act_reform.html)



## Victoria

Department of Planning and Regional Development (2011) Heritage Council Strategic Plan. Available online at [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/heritage/about/heritage-victoria/heritage-council-of-victoria/hc-strategic-plan](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/heritage/about/heritage-victoria/heritage-council-of-victoria/hc-strategic-plan)

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (2011) Strategic Plan. Available online at [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/76898/VAHC-Plan-Version-web-2.pdf](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0011/76898/VAHC-Plan-Version-web-2.pdf)

Parks Victoria (2011) Strategic Plan. Available online at [parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/vision,-purpose,-values](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/vision,-purpose,-values)

## Western Australia

Government of Western Australia (2011) State Cultural Heritage Policy. Available online at [www.heritage.wa.gov.au](http://www.heritage.wa.gov.au).

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