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4 August 2005

Heritage Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
PO Box 80  
Belconnen, ACT 2616  
[sent by email to: [heritage@pc.gov.au](mailto:heritage@pc.gov.au)]

### **National Cultural Heritage Forum: Information for the Productivity Commission**

I write on behalf of the Chair, Sharon Sullivan, and members of the National Cultural Heritage Forum. The Forum is the peak non-government advisory body to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for the Arts on cultural heritage. The Forum provides the Ministers with direct access to the non-government organisations most directly concerned with the understanding, conservation and management of Australia's cultural heritage places and collections.

The Forum therefore has a considerable interest in the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage.

Member organisations of the Forum are:

- Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology
- Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology
- Australia ICOMOS
- Australian Academy of the Humanities
- Australian Council of National Trusts
- Australian Heritage Council
- Australian Local Government Association
- Federation of Australian Historical Societies
- Heritage Chairs & Officials of Australia and New Zealand
- Indigenous Cultures Program
- Engineering Heritage Australia
- Museums Australia
- National Indigenous Cultural Heritage Officers Network
- National Environment Consultative Forum
- Property Council of Australia
- Royal Australian Institute of Architects

In addition, the Forum has recommended to the Minister a number of additional organisations for membership, to include aspects of cultural heritage not already well-represented (such as materials conservation), and especially to increase the representation of Indigenous heritage in the operations of the Forum. The Forum has

reciprocal membership arrangements with the equivalent environment forum (the National Environment Consultative Forum – NECF).

Australia ICOMOS currently provides the Chair and the Secretariat to the National Cultural Heritage Forum, for which it receives a very modest grant from the Department of the Environment & Heritage. The Heritage Division of the Department also supports the functions of the Forum, through assistance with arrangement of meetings, liaison with the Department and Minister's office, and provision of information about Government programs.

The Forum has not met formally with the Minister(s) since March 2004, and hopes to secure a meeting date for 2005 in the near future.

In addition to its formal meetings, the Forum acts as a means of information sharing and cooperative action among cultural heritage NGOs. We have ongoing communications with the Department of the Environment & Heritage, and have established a liaison with the Heritage Chairs & Officials of Australia and New Zealand concerning matters of shared interest. We are scheduled to meet with the Heritage Chairs & Official for a portion of their annual meeting in September 2005.

Numerous member organisations of the Forum involved in the identification, conservation and presentation of Australia's *historic heritage places* have prepared submissions to the Inquiry and will be participating in the hearings being held this month. At this time, the Forum has not prepared a coordinated submission, although it may decide to do so at a later stage (such as in response to the draft report of the Inquiry).

In the meantime, and to assist the Inquiry, I have attached the Forum document *Vision for Australia's Cultural Heritage* which represents a consensus view about many aspects of the conservation of Australia's historic heritage. This document was negotiated by the membership of the Forum throughout 2003, formed the basis of discussions with the (previous) Federal Minister regarding potential budget initiatives, and was adopted for presentation to and discussion with the Minister in March 2004.

Given the numerous advances and changes that have occurred in the last 18 months (such as the implementation and real-life experience with the new national heritage regime, the establishment of the national Collections Council, and the commissioning of the Productivity Commission Inquiry), the recommended initiatives in the Statement are in need of revision, although the key vision statements are more robust.

We hope that you will find this material useful in your consideration of the matters before the Inquiry. The Forum has supported the initiation of this Inquiry, and looks forward to further opportunities to participate. If the Commissioners require any further information, queries should in the first instance be directed to me, care of the Australia ICOMOS Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,



**Kristal Buckley**  
**President, Australia ICOMOS**

Attachments:

1. Productivity Commission Submission Cover Sheet (rtf format);
2. *National Cultural Heritage Forum: Vision for Australia's Cultural Heritage* (MS word format)

# **NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE FORUM**

## **Vision for Australia's Cultural Heritage**

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Our vision is underpinned by an understanding of the many connections between cultural heritage and community identity, regional distinctiveness, amenity and quality of life, and the social and economic well-being of the individuals and communities, which together form our nation.

### **Preamble**

The National Cultural Heritage Forum (NCHF) is the peak advisory body to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for the Arts on cultural heritage. The Forum provides the Ministers with direct access to non-government organisations most directly concerned with the understanding, conservation and management of Australia's cultural heritage places and collections.

In discussion with the Minister for Environment and Heritage and officers of the Department of Environment and Heritage, the Forum has developed a broad-reaching vision for heritage places and collections in Australia.

This Vision Statement is seen by the Forum as a framework within which changing issues and pressing priorities can be identified and considered. In addition to this framework, a suite of *initial measures* has been identified. These are provided as an indication of some of the steps - large and small - which we believe are required to begin the process of achieving the vision. Implementation of the initial measures will enable early and tangible progress to be made toward the larger vision.

This statement recognises that the Commonwealth Government is a key player in achieving national goals for cultural heritage. The new national heritage legislation and accompanying program – *Distinctively Australian* – provides a good foundation and important opportunities for achieving the vision outlined in this statement. However, the statement also recognises the crucial role of State/Territory and local governments, heritage professionals and communities.

The Forum is therefore seeking a widely agreed and shared vision for the future of our nation's heritage.

### **Vision for Australia's Cultural Heritage**

Australia's heritage, shaped by nature and history, is an inheritance passed from one generation to the next. It is a living record of places, objects, events, associations and memories which define and sustain our natural and cultural history. It is for us, the present generation, to nourish and nurture this inheritance for future generations.

Australia's cultural heritage has many inter-related expressions including places, objects, documents, traditions, customs and languages. Collectively they hold the nation's stories; they are the responsibility of us all. They are fundamental to our sense of identity and in promoting that identity to the world.

Australia's cultural inheritance has been under increasing threat as economic restructuring, and social and technological changes have dramatically altered neighbourhoods, pressured urban centres, and emptied the countryside. Australia's cultural heritage is an important element in sustaining communities, and in local and regional economic opportunities.

This NCHF Cultural Heritage Vision Statement draws on the decades of dedication and commitment of those who have sought and continue to seek the vibrantly healthy cultural environment envisioned by communities and professionals alike.

Based on the *Burra Charter*, the Forum considers that *conservation* means all the processes of looking after Australia's cultural heritage places and collections so as to retain their cultural significance. Conservation is therefore an integral part of good management, and includes physical protection, research, community engagement, interpretation and education. *Australia's cultural heritage places and collections must be effectively conserved in accordance with this definition.*

To achieve the conservation of Australia's cultural heritage places and collections, five major strategic directions have been identified:

1. Government Leadership
2. Recognising the Value and Condition of Australia's Cultural Heritage
3. Community Engagement
4. Best Practice
5. Telling the Stories

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## **1. Government Leadership**

All governments share responsibility for caring for Australia's cultural heritage. Governments must demonstrate leadership in the conservation of cultural heritage through:

- commitment to powerful and comprehensive policies and procedures which consider heritage in all government decisions;
- recognition of and care for cultural heritage items in their direct keeping;

- allocation of adequate funds and resources;
- commitment to effective partnerships with other stakeholders (including through inter-governmental cooperation) to support cultural heritage objectives.

**Vision** Commonwealth government leadership and national cooperation by all governments through the EPHC and Heritage Chairs & Officials in the documentation, protection, conservation and interpretation of Australia's cultural heritage in all its diversity:

- strong statutory protection for cultural heritage;
- comprehensive policies and programs for cultural heritage;
- adequate provision of professional expertise in government agencies to manage the full diversity of heritage values;
- best practice management of government-owned heritage assets.

**Measure** 1. Commitment by all governments to an Integrated National Cultural Heritage Policy. (see 1.1 below).

### **1.1 Integrated National Heritage Policy**

The NCHF acknowledges and supports the decision by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to develop an Integrated National Heritage Policy through the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC).

With the implementation of the new national heritage system, there is now a basis to develop a comprehensive and integrated national heritage strategy.

The continued disparity between the statutory arrangements for cultural heritage in different jurisdictions, and the notable gaps in consistent and adequate statutory protection for the full range of cultural heritage values must be remedied. These include cultural landscapes, historical archaeology, underwater heritage, intangible cultural heritage, heritage collections, and moveable cultural heritage. There must now be better coordination of legislation between jurisdictions, and more effective information sharing by governments.

**Vision** Sustained commitment from Governments for a comprehensive and integrated national heritage policy, and an accompanying strategy for implementation.

- Measure** 1. As a first step, the EPHC should clearly articulate the vision and policy framework for the Integrated National Heritage Policy. Adoption of the *Burra Charter* (as revised in 1999) by the EPHC should guide the further development of the Policy.
2. The EPHC and Cultural Ministers Council should develop and pursue an agreed and publicly stated set of national strategic priorities for the protection, care and celebration of Australia's cultural heritage, including adequate and consistent systems of statutory protection.

3. A key priority for the new Australian Heritage Council should be to articulate and communicate its vision for Australia's heritage places.
4. Through the EPHC, Governments should commit to providing seamless protection for the nation's cultural heritage.

First steps in this process should include:

- early identification of gaps in statutory protection for aspects of cultural heritage;
- minimum appropriate standards for the protection of all aspects of cultural heritage in all jurisdictions;
- best practice benchmarks for heritage protection systems that can be adopted by all jurisdictions;
- 'model' provisions for inclusion in State/Territory cultural heritage legislation;
- comprehensive reporting by Governments against these established model provisions and standards.

Specifically, the Commonwealth Government should adopt the NCHF recommendations concerning use of the Register of the National Estate as one tool in redressing identified statutory deficiencies for cultural heritage (as outlined in the NCHF paper *The Future Role for the Register of the National Estate*).

5. Commonwealth commitment to the implementation of the recommendations of the *Evatt Report*, and to passage of the *Australian and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Bill* in a form which enacts these recommendations and is acceptable to Indigenous people.

A similar commitment is also required from State governments to develop adequate Indigenous heritage legislation.

6. As a matter of urgency, the existing legislation for maritime and underwater heritage should be reviewed to achieve nationally consistent and integrated statutory protection for all underwater heritage.

Completion of the national Underwater and Maritime Heritage Strategy to:

- enhance perception of Australia's maritime heritage;
  - protect and conserve all forms of underwater cultural heritage, including Indigenous heritage;
  - integrate underwater cultural heritage with maritime aspects of terrestrial heritage;
  - interpret maritime heritage for targeted interest groups;
  - market maritime heritage to create partnerships to enhance management;
  - facilitate the development of standard provisions and policies for use by the Commonwealth and all States and Territories;
  - address the issues of adequate and timely funding;
  - broaden the scope of Australia's programs in preparation for the ratification of the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage* (see section 1.4).
7. Through the EPHC, Governments should review the statutory provisions for historical archaeology and ensure that specific legislative provisions are developed for historical archaeological sites, deposits and artefacts/relics. Uniformity of such legislation is strongly encouraged.

## **1.2 New National Heritage System**

The new national heritage system provides the context for many of the measures identified in this Statement. The Forum recognises that it is a key outcome of the 1997 COAG agreement, and is hoping to work closely with the Commonwealth Government and new Australian Heritage Council to realise the potential benefits for Australia's heritage of the new legislative arrangements and the accompanying *Distinctively Australian* program.

### **Vision**

The new Commonwealth Heritage system providing powerful and community supported identification, interpretation and protection of national and Commonwealth Heritage; and, through leadership and partnerships with the States and Territories, contributing to the protection of Heritage at all levels.

### **Measure s**

1. Speedy development of the National List, which is fully representative of Australia's natural and cultural heritage, and which captures the essence, the variety and the full range of

- experience of the human occupation of Australia.
2. Involvement of the States and Territories, the community and key heritage groups in developing the National List, in such a way that there is general ownership of it.
  3. Early implementation and promotion of the ability of the new Act to provide effective planning, conservation and protection for places on the National List.
  4. Commonwealth department and agency compliance with the new legislative requirements and the speedy development of the Commonwealth Heritage List (see section 1.4).
  5. Active cooperation between the government and the National Cultural Heritage Forum to develop and publicise the new National List and its protection; and other elements of the *Distinctively Australian* program, including the development of an active campaign of support for and information about the National and Commonwealth Lists.
  6. Regular meetings between the new Australian Heritage Council, and the National Cultural Heritage Forum, to exchange information, and discuss strategies and proposed outcomes.

### **1.3 Cultural Heritage Funding**

There are no long-term national funding programs or tax incentives focussed on Australia's cultural heritage places designed to encourage private, corporate and/or philanthropic contributions.

This finding of Australia's *State of the Environment Report* (2001) is in sharp contrast to the commitment of national funding and the use of the Commonwealth taxation system to support natural heritage conservation (including tax deductibility for donations).

Commonwealth programs such as the Natural Heritage Trust have made an immense difference in community understanding of and care for natural heritage. The Forum considers that a similar initiative is urgently required for the conservation of cultural heritage.

It is acknowledged that governments cannot and should not be the sole source of funding for the care of the nation's cultural heritage but they must provide an adequate level of basic funding which presently does not exist. Partnerships with property owners, communities, philanthropic organisations and the corporate sector are also needed. Creating the right package of

funding and financial incentives is an early necessary step in working toward adequate and sustainable resources for cultural heritage.

**Vision** Adequate funding for the conservation, management, maintenance and interpretation of Australia's cultural and natural heritage.

- Measures**
1. A dedicated national fund – similar to the Natural Heritage Trust - is urgently required to support cultural heritage conservation, management and interpretation at all levels and especially by local communities. This could be achieved through the creation of a new fund, or through substantial expansion of the current Commonwealth 'CHPP' program (Cultural Heritage Projects Program).
  2. The Commonwealth Government should urgently consider ways of redressing the current low level of applications for the 'CHPP' from Indigenous communities. An important avenue of encouraging Indigenous community participation in the program will be the re-casting of the 'national' focus of the program to enable significant local projects to be supported.
  3. All governments should, as a first step, speedily consider and develop responses to the recommendations being developed by the EPHC Taskforce investigating Heritage Incentives and Innovative Policy Tools.
  4. The Commonwealth Government should urgently fund key national studies to better determine the economic and social values of the nation's cultural heritage. See section 2. All governments should fully and actively participate in these studies.
  5. The Commonwealth Government should make a commitment to utilising taxation measures to support cultural heritage conservation:
    - A package of innovative tax measures to ensure the sustainability of heritage places presented to the public is urgently required.
    - Tax deductibility for donations to cultural heritage NGOs is needed to attract additional corporate and philanthropic funds.
    - Substantial incentives should be provided for private

owners of heritage property to conserve their properties.

6. Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments should review the impact of the typical short-term nature of grants and funding programs to determine how these programs could be better directed to support sustainable community-driven cultural programs and projects (including for Indigenous communities).
7. All governments should take immediate action, in consultation with Indigenous communities to remedy the stark inequalities in funding for indigenous cultural heritage conservation and management.

Governments should acknowledge that, for Indigenous communities caring for their heritage, direct funding assistance will be more effective than taxation incentives.

#### ***1.4 Management of Government Heritage Assets***

Public property forms a crucial part of Australia's heritage. Many of the places most highly valued by communities are in public ownership.

Governments are the custodians of these places and hold them in trust for the benefit of the community.

Communities nationwide have become increasingly vocal in their concern to see government policy for publicly owned property determined within a broad framework which recognises and protects the inherent values of these places.

The Commonwealth Government has made landmark changes to the way it will now manage its properties through the establishment of the Commonwealth Heritage List. This must be complemented by a clear policy commitment to the retention of places with outstanding Commonwealth heritage values, and to providing transparent mechanisms for ensuring the protection of the heritage values of properties subject to disposal.

***Vision*** Commitment by all governments to exemplary identification, conservation, management and interpretation of their own heritage properties.

***Measure s*** 1. The Commonwealth Government should act promptly to ensure Commonwealth department and agency compliance with the new legislative requirements and the speedy development of the Commonwealth Heritage List.

The Commonwealth Government should implement the recommendations of the *NCHF Policy Recommendations for the Ownership and Disposal of Commonwealth Heritage Property*, particularly recommendations 1a (regarding incorporation of cultural heritage into the Commonwealth Property Principles), 1c (regarding retention of properties in public ownership where this is fundamental to the conservation of their heritage values) and 3f (regarding the need for standardised procedures).

2. All other governments should apply the principles outlined in the *NCHF Policy Recommendations for the Ownership and Disposal of Commonwealth Heritage Property* when considering the disposal of public assets.

## **1.5 Acceptance of International Obligations**

Australia has a proud reputation as a good international citizen, active in the initiation and encouragement of international cooperation in support of cultural heritage.

**Vision** Australian Government commitment to fulfilling its international treaty obligations, and to actively supporting other forms of collaboration to ensure that cultural heritage is identified, conserved, protected and interpreted world-wide.

- Measures**
1. Ongoing commitment to the conservation and protection of Australian World Heritage sites, and properties on the tentative list through Commonwealth Government leadership and inter-governmental cooperation.
  2. Development of a more transparent and proactive process for identifying possible future World Heritage nominations, including the development of a thematically based indicative list. This could arise from public consultation regarding significant themes for the National List.
  3. Conclude the development of arrangements for World Heritage nomination of existing cultural sites on Australia's tentative list including the Sydney Opera House, convict history sites, and rock art sites.
  4. Renewed commitment to Australia's role supporting cultural heritage conservation in the Asia/Pacific region, especially through the provision of training opportunities.
  5. Commitment to prompt and effective community and stakeholder discussion of the potential opportunities and issues arising from the ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).
  6. Prompt progress toward the ratification and promotion of other UNESCO Conventions and Declarations protecting cultural heritage, including:
    - UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001)
    - Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the

Event of Armed Conflict – *the Hague Convention* (1954)

- UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (2003)
  - UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
  - UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970)
  - UNESCO “New Delhi” Recommendations on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (1956)
7. Amendments to international aid funding programs – in particular AusAID – to allow for funding of cultural heritage initiatives.
  8. Support for the international activities of cultural heritage NGOs, especially where they are mandated by international treaties.

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## 2. Recognising the Value and Condition of Australia’s Cultural Heritage

### 2.1 *Recognising the Social and Economic Value of Australia’s Cultural Heritage*

While the linkages between cultural heritage and community well-being are generally understood, methods for measuring these values are not well established in Australia. Recognising these inter-relationships is an important step in achieving better political support and community engagement in cultural heritage conservation.

**Vision** Recognition of the social, economic and cultural value of Australia’s heritage places and collections to be embedded in government policy and decision making.

**Initial Measures**

1. An inquiry into the economic benefits of Australia’s cultural heritage should be undertaken as a matter of priority by the Productivity Commission. Initiation of this study should include discussion of the proposed terms of reference with the NCHF.
2. A community-centred review of the social and economic

values of cultural heritage should be commissioned as a priority by the EPHC. The recent landmark English study *Power of Place* provides a useful model for developing this work in Australia, which would include:

- economic studies
  - extensive community consultation
  - analysis of the ways heritage places contribute to community well being
  - implications for action by governments and communities to ensure the long-term viability of Australia's cultural heritage places.
3. A national survey of community attitudes to cultural heritage should be developed and conducted as proposed by the Heritage Chairs & Officials.

In the longer term, data on community attitudes should be regularly and routinely collected through the work of the Bureau of Statistics. The Heritage Chairs & Officials should initiate discussions with the Bureau's Statistical Working Group to explore these needed initiatives.

## ***2.2 Data Collection, Monitoring & Reporting***

The Commonwealth decision to monitor cultural heritage as part of State of Environment reporting was a landmark decision, a world first, and strongly supported by the NCHF.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage is required to monitor and report every 5 years on the state of Australia's environment. Both the 1995 and the 2001 *State of the Environment* Reports identified the lack of standardised comprehensive cultural heritage data as a key issue needing to be addressed if reporting on cultural heritage and monitoring of changes in condition is to be effective.

*State of the Environment* reporting enables the condition of Australia's heritage to be understood. Importantly, it also draws attention to trends which may threaten cultural heritage. Rigorous identification of these trends can form the basis for responsive and effective policies and programs.

***Vision*** National and regional reporting on the condition, trends and threats to cultural heritage based on standardised data which is

current, accurate, relevant and comprehensive.

Use of regular reporting, including State of the Environment reporting as a major driver for policy and program development by all levels of government.

- Measure s**
1. Commitment by all governments to work through the EPHC to develop a nationally coordinated system for collection of standardised, regular and accurate data concerning cultural heritage, based on agreed cultural heritage outcomes and supported by the use of indicators. This measure is urgent since the next national report is due for completion in 2006.
    - Partnerships between the Commonwealth and the States/Territories are needed to ensure that heritage agencies are accountable for monitoring and reporting on the condition of heritage assets (including in the national State of the Environment Reports). If needed, bilateral agreements can be developed to clarify the expected outcomes of these partnerships.
    - Ensuring that regular monitoring of the social and economic values of cultural heritage to communities is reported, including in State of the Environment Reports (*following the studies identified in section 2.1 above*).
    - Developing more effective indicators and methods of data collection for reporting on Indigenous cultural heritage.
    - Continued development and enhancement of the Australian Heritage Places Inventory (including improved connections between government heritage databases) is an urgent and important element in improving the monitoring of Australia's cultural heritage.
  2. As a first step, a national audit of data collection for cultural heritage should be conducted, so that gaps can be identified, and a complete national set of base level data should be established for the next *State of Environment Report* due out in 2006.
  3. Commitment by all governments to include monitoring of the outcomes of the Integrated National Heritage Policy as part of the State of the Environment reporting process.

4. A national survey of rural heritage places should be undertaken to determine the nature and extent of the threats to heritage places in remote, rural and regional Australia.

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### 3. Community Engagement

Communities are the custodians, knowledge holders and sources of meaning of Australia's cultural heritage. Understanding and accessing cultural heritage places and collections is fundamental to their well being.

#### 3.1 Heritage Care

Conservation of cultural heritage is specifically excluded from the provisions of the *Natural Heritage Trust*. This not only restricts access to resources for the conservation of cultural heritage, it also artificially divides the more holistic perceptions communities bring to caring for their country and the land.

Local heritage is the heritage asset least well protected through the existing framework of statutory protection. However, local heritage is highly valued by communities, and is strongly linked to regional distinctiveness and to local community identity.

Additionally, Australia's cultural heritage collections do not reside solely in major museums and other collecting institutions. On the contrary, every community, small regional museum, archaeological collection, keeping place, gallery or historical collection acts as a custodian of cultural heritage, held in trust for all Australians.

**Vision** Recognition, responsiveness and support for communities in caring for their cultural heritage.

**Measures** 1. Establish a '*Heritage Care*' program to develop community heritage conservation programs, achieving both community engagement and substantial and cost effective conservation outcomes.

In establishing pilot projects to initiate the *Heritage Care* program, regional and cultural diversity should be recognised (including the need for a pilot project with Indigenous communities).

2. Provide broad-scale and expert advisory services sufficiently resourced to assist community identification, conservation, management and interpretation of local heritage places.

Provide needed heritage advisory services at the local level for Indigenous communities.

Develop a network of Heritage and Environment Education Centres to support the work of local and regional heritage advisers.

3. Acknowledge and support the Regional Cultural Alliance and its focus on training and capacity building at the regional level.
4. Enhance the appreciation of the social and economic benefits of cultural heritage through specifically commissioned inquiries, surveys of community attitudes, interpretation of heritage places and collections, and integrated approaches to regional cultural tourism (see sections 2 and 5).
5. Develop responses to the urgent need for support for the conservation and assessment of significant documentary collections held in a variety of contexts at the local level (including local historical societies and Indigenous communities).
6. Provide adequate Commonwealth Government funding for the operation of cultural heritage NGOs.

### ***3.2 Recognising and supporting the unique cultural rights and responsibilities of Indigenous Communities***

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a unique status as the traditional owners and custodians of their heritage and country, and have consequent obligations to sustain and maintain their heritage. Their living culture and the evidence of their presence in Australia immensely enhances and enriches Australia's cultural heritage.

**Vision** Appropriate recognition and support for Indigenous cultural heritage – including the living and ancient cultures of Indigenous people, and tangible and intangible heritage. Consistent and effective recognition for the Indigenous concept of the indivisibility of the significance of natural and cultural landscapes.

An appropriate level of resourcing and support for Indigenous

communities in caring for their heritage, which adequately reflects the significance, richness and widespread nature of the manifestations of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Australia, and which provides for its presentation to others through interpretation, education and tourism.

Consistent and effective involvement of Indigenous people in all decisions affecting their heritage – at the national, State and local levels.

- Measures**
1. Directly involve and resource Indigenous community involvement in the identification of the heritage values of all heritage landscapes, places and collections.
  2. Urgent attention by all Governments to redress the gaps in statutory protection for all aspects of Indigenous cultural heritage (including intangible heritage), and the inadequacy of resources available for Indigenous heritage conservation and management. (*see sections 1.1, 1.3*)
  3. Ensure that the needs of Indigenous communities are incorporated into all aspects of cultural heritage policies and programs, including:
    - Integrated National Heritage Policy (*see section 1.1*)
    - Management of the values of public land assets (*see section 1.4*)
    - Measuring the social and economic benefits of cultural heritage (*see section 2.1*)
    - Heritage Care programs (*see section 3.1*)
    - Training and Education (*see section 4.2*)
    - Research (*see section 4.3*)
    - Interpretation and Education (*see sections 5.1 and 5.2*)
  4. Ensure that effective responses are developed to identified threats to Indigenous cultural heritage. For example, focussed programs are urgently required to retain Aboriginal languages (as identified in the 2001 *State of the Environment Report*).
  5. Develop more effective methods for actively involving Indigenous organisations in the work of the National Cultural Heritage Forum.

*Note: In keeping with the need for consistent and effective involvement of Indigenous people in all decisions affecting their heritage, this section of the vision, is a preliminary statement only, and requires more input from the Indigenous organisations which are part of the National Cultural Heritage Forum.*

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## 4. Best Practice

### 4.1 Conservation Philosophy and Practice

The aim of conservation of cultural heritage places and collections is the retention of their heritage values and meanings. Achieving this aim will rely on a comprehensive philosophical approach which defines appropriate standards and supports ethical practice.

The NCHF acknowledges and supports the work of the National Collections Advisory Forum. Forum members contributed to the Key Needs Study conducted by the former Heritage Collections Council, and support the establishment of a national body for collections.

In particular, Forum members endorse the explicit recognition of the vital connection between heritage places and the collection material relevant to them made by the Prime Minister when he launched the *Distinctively Australian* program recently.

**Vision** Identification, assessment and conservation of heritage places will occur in accordance with an agreed set of national standards.

Because definitions of ‘best practice’ will change over time, professional associations will work with governments, property owners and managers, and communities to determine and communicate appropriate standards of heritage conservation and management practice.

- Measures**
1. Government heritage agencies should ensure that ‘best practice’ standards and techniques are identified and disseminated through partnerships with relevant professional organisations. Support for technical research is an essential element of this commitment.
  2. Public collecting institutions must be supported to ensure that the long-term conservation and care of heritage collections is achieved.

3. Governments and relevant professional organisations should consider the range of possibilities for working with Standards Australia.
4. A representative, well resourced national collections body supportive of accreditation and appropriate standardisation of collection management, should be established to:
  - fund or source funding for collection documentation, conservation and assessment – and guarantee funding over the whole life cycle of the project;
  - provide flexible and comprehensive training and support for volunteers and isolated professionals working with collections;
  - ensure all collecting organisations are electronically networked for support and training purposes (eg. through renewal of the work of the former *Connecting the Nation* program).
5. Member organisations of the NCHF have produced a range of policy and guideline documents to assist with the articulation of best practice in a range of settings. Many of these deal in detail with specific aspects of Australia's cultural heritage.

However, several are considered to form a broad framework for articulating best practice in Australia. The NCHF particularly endorses and encourages the widespread use of the following:

- the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (*The Burra Charter*)
- the Museums Australia *Sustainability Policy for Museums and Collection Management*
- the Museums Australia policy *Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities* (concerning relationships between collecting institutions and Indigenous communities)
- the Australian Heritage Commission's guide *Ask First: A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values*
- *Australian Natural Heritage Charter* produced in partnership between the IUCN and the former Australian Heritage Commission

6. As an urgent specific priority, governments should work collectively to resolve the pressing issues of resourcing, access, research and storage of archaeological collections.

#### **4.2 Conservation Training and Education**

The lack of a national strategy and commitment to conservation training is detrimental to the long-term conservation of Australia's cultural heritage, and mitigates against the burgeoning international recognition of Australia's expertise in conservation practice.

- Vision** Adequate and accessible cultural heritage conservation education and training and ongoing support for professional practitioners, heritage property managers, volunteers and Indigenous communities which:
- is based on best practice standards and techniques across a broad spectrum of disciplines
  - ensures that the creativity, skills, capacities and passionate dedication needed to care for Australia's cultural heritage are available
  - takes into account the geographic distribution of education and training institutions and opportunities

- Measures** 1. Establish a National Conservation Training Forum to develop a national strategy to ensure long term provision of conservation training. In undertaking this task, the Forum should:
- involve governments, peak conservation bodies, community organisations and the education sector;
  - ensure that the full range of conservation training is available, including a mix of general and technical training, apprenticeships and academic courses;
  - ensure that the training needs of Indigenous communities are identified and addressed;
  - regularly monitor the findings of audits of training needs and effectiveness;
  - foster innovative schemes to encourage sharing of skills and technologies through partnership programs between providers and managers of heritage properties;

- develop national programs for the training of craftspeople and technicians in all aspects of heritage conservation, and promote the employment of trained craftspeople in conservation.
2. Through the EPHC and NCHF, Governments should consider the establishment of professional accreditation standards which are required for professionals undertaking work involving heritage.
  3. Establish a comprehensive national program of accredited volunteer training able to provide on-going training for volunteers in conservation, collection management and interpretation, sited in appropriately adapted heritage sites, where possible.
  4. Provision of incentives for cultural heritage training for owners, managers, staff and volunteers caring for important heritage places (particularly for publicly owned heritage properties).
  5. Through inter-governmental cooperation, provision of resources for training of Indigenous cultural heritage officers, particularly at the community level.
  6. Support international exchange of cultural heritage professionals for activities such as training and professional development.

#### **4.3 Research**

Cultural heritage has the ability to contribute to knowledge and to our understanding of the past and our environment through research.

Research is vital for the identification and contextual assessment of the heritage values of places and collections – this will be particularly important to support the values-based national heritage legislation.

Research allows us to understand the national and international importance of our heritage, and is an integral element of all aspects of *best practice*, underpinning conservation decisions and providing the basis for engaging and relevant interpretation.

Four major categories of research are needed:

- Academic research, including thematic work and

contextual studies (in partnership with regional stakeholders)

- Place-centred studies and area surveys
- Heritage data collection (including statistical studies and consideration of social and economic impacts) – *this area of research is discussed in section 2.*
- Technical research – *this area of research is discussed in section 4.*

**Vision** Recognition of the importance of research as the basis of good cultural heritage conservation, management and interpretation.

Enhanced national and international understanding of Australia's unique cultural heritage through research excellence and community access to all publicly funded research.

- Measures**
1. The Australian Heritage Council should establish a renewed National Heritage Research Program with the support and involvement of all governments.
  2. As a first step, an audit and analysis of existing national research should be undertaken to identify gaps in current knowledge.
  3. The scope of the existing 'CHPP' (Cultural Heritage Projects Program) should be expanded to enable research projects to be funded.
  4. Support for the development and ongoing maintenance of a research and bibliographic clearing house is needed as a priority. The Australian Heritage Bibliography could be used as a basis for a more vigorously developed and accessible source.
  5. Commitment to the use of the Register of the National Estate as an important tool for research at national, state, regional and local levels (as discussed by the NCHF paper *The Future Role for the Register of the National Estate*).
  6. An integrated and recurrent national heritage places survey strategy should be developed and linked to the Australian Heritage Places Inventory and State of the Environment reporting.
  7. 'Cultural Heritage' should be adopted by the Australian

Research Council as a priority research area.

#### **4.4 Sustainability & Cultural Heritage**

Conservation lies at the heart of sustainability.

No community, no nation, will manage its resources in a sustainable manner without a strong commitment to the conservation of its cultural and natural inheritance.

Communities will only conserve resources if they understand their value for future generations, and believe they will be valued by future generations. Heritage places and objects resonate with stories of Australia's past and their conservation enables the community to respond to change.

Therefore, in order for the principles of sustainability to guide decisions about the use and allocation of present day resources, communities must be able to locate their decisions in a timeframe which sites within the context of the past and the future.

Commitment to the conservation of the nation's cultural heritage is central to the development of a truly nation-wide conservation ethic.

**Vision** A nation committed to sustaining its natural and cultural heritage through a holistic understanding of the present and future value of this inheritance.

- Measures**
1. Building on the work initiated through the Heritage Chairs & Officials and the *Year of the Built Environment* program, articulate the relationships and synergies between sustainability objectives and Australia's cultural heritage places, collections and landscapes.
  2. Development of national planning guidelines through the EPHC and the Heritage Chairs & Officials to provide for: or: Support the work of the proposed Year of the Built Environment Policy Working Group to develop guidelines/policies ensuring that:
    - heritage significance is included as an integral consideration in all planning processes, and in the assessment and management of development proposals;
    - better adaptive re-use incentives are developed to conserve cultural heritage places;
    - more effective relationships are established with

professional organisations for planning, development and property management.

3. Through the EPHC and the Heritage Chairs & Officials, ensure that Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies responsible for environmental management have a policy commitment to cultural heritage conservation and management, and take account of cultural heritage values in their programs and activities.
4. Ensure that engineering heritage values are considered and managed in upgrading urban infrastructure.
5. Given that all landscapes in Australia have some cultural value, there is an urgent need for a holistic and effective landscape assessment method (and associated guidelines) to be established throughout Australia through the EPHC and the Heritage Chairs & Officials. It is particularly important that the potential Indigenous cultural heritage values of landscapes – including intangible aspects of culture - are respected.

As an example, the Forum notes and supports the collaborative project recently initiated by the Australian Council of National Trusts and the Australian Wind Energy Association.

6. The Commonwealth Government should develop protocols under the EPBC Act which ensure that both natural and cultural heritage values are considered in assessment and ‘action’ procedures.

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## 5. Telling the Stories

### ***5.1 Education & Interpretation***

It is only through education and interpretation that the value and meanings of heritage places and collections can be understood, maintained, enjoyed, and transmitted to future generations.

Interpretation is therefore an integral element of cultural heritage conservation. Research, good management of places and collections and community engagement all underpin interpretation.

All heritage places and collections should be interpreted, and their value as educational resources realised. Interpretation of heritage

places should always recognise their Indigenous association with country.

**Vision** Imaginatively presented and accessible heritage places and collections which play a key role in the cultural and economic life of communities. Telling the range of stories relevant to Australia's history, and representing the diversity of Australia's cultural heritage.

- Measures**
1. Increased recognition and support for the distributed national collection of heritage properties and collections currently cared for by community organisations (including Indigenous communities) which are struggling to conserve and interpret them.
  2. Fully funded programs should be initiated by governments to encourage the visitation of heritage places as both educational and tourism resources.
  3. Promotion of the use of heritage in school curriculum (eg. through the use of the *Making History* materials issued to all schools by the National Centre for History Education).
  4. Development of better links/collaborations between history education departments and heritage places and collections. Foster the use of heritage places and collections as educational resources.
  5. Commitment by Governments to a national review of community opportunities to access and benefit from the national estate, and to develop recommendations to achieve appropriate access. Include consideration of:
    - Costs and charges
    - Geographical distribution and regional disadvantage
    - Means of presentation
    - Ownership/use of accessible places, financial sustainability
    - Resources/skills for interpretation
  6. Governments to give early consideration to the adoption of the international 'Ename Charter' for interpretation of places of cultural significance currently being developed by ICOMOS.

7. Development of benchmarking of interpretive tools, and assistance to owners and managers of publicly accessible heritage properties (including Indigenous communities where relevant) to implement best practice approaches to interpretation.

## **5.2 Tourism**

Tourism can and should become a vehicle for enabling the sustainability and promotion of some of Australia's most important cultural heritage places and collections.

Full advantage should be taken of the opportunity presented by the new national heritage system to develop a framework for integrating cultural heritage and tourism initiatives and products.

### **Vision**

Sustainable and vibrant cultural heritage tourism, providing new economic opportunities – particularly for regional and rural communities – while supporting regional distinctiveness, social cohesion and community identity.

### **Measures**

1. Encourage adoption by all governments of the recommendations of *Going Places*, the report of the EPHC Tourism and Heritage Taskforce. In particular, the EPHC Task Force should be represented on the Industry Implementation and Advisory Group which is currently advising the Minister for Tourism on the implementation of the recent White Paper.
2. Develop stronger thematic approaches in heritage and tourism, through State and Territory programs, the new National Heritage List and programs arising from the *Going Places* initiatives.

An integrated approach to the development of themes should be adopted across agencies for use in tourism development and marketing, enabling a cohesive package of tourism and cultural heritage places to be promoted.

Pilot studies in different jurisdictions should be considered to demonstrate the operation of this approach, including tourism promotion, visitor information and infrastructure.

3. Forge stronger links between cultural heritage interests and the tourism industry. The Heritage Chairs & Officials and NCHF should convene a meeting with the Chairs and CEO's of

Commonwealth, State and Territory tourism boards to:

- quickly identify potential partnership opportunities
  - ensure that the membership of Tourism Boards in all jurisdictions includes at least one person with substantial and recognised heritage expertise
  - arrange reciprocal membership arrangements between the NCHF and the tourism industry
4. Commission the Bureau of Tourism Research to conduct a national study to collate the statistics of visitation to cultural heritage places. This is urgently required to more efficiently assess issues of demand and the contribution that cultural heritage places and institutions make to local, regional and state economies.
  5. Consider a range of incentives and policy tools to allow increased corporate and philanthropic contributions to cultural heritage conservation. Such measures are considered to provide the best opportunity for supporting the ongoing care of cultural heritage places promoted as tourism destinations. (see *section 1.3*)