



**NORTHERN TERRITORY
TOURIST COMMISSION**

17 March 2006

Miss Irvine
Heritage Inquiry
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By email: heritage@pc.gov.au

Dear Ms Irvine

It would be appreciated if you could please add this submission to the Productivity Commission's enquiry into the Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places.

The Northern Territory Tourist Commission (NTTC) will contribute on the key issue: *What are the current pressures and emerging trends influencing the conservation of historic heritage places and, in light of these, how can the policy framework be improved?* In particular, the NTTC submission will concentrate on the tourism benefits of heritage conservation and the impacts heritage tourism has on the conservation of heritage places.

The NTTC considers history and heritage as one of the key building blocks to the ongoing success of tourism in the Territory (complementing the NT's other key strengths of nature-based and indigenous tourism). Recently the NTTC contracted Charles Darwin University to develop a tool to evaluate the value of heritage tourism in the NT. The study showed 7.5% of total visitor expenditure in the NT, in 2004, was attributable to heritage tourism (interestingly, this increased to 10.4% for the destination of Alice Springs).

As a result, the NTTC would advocate that there are significant benefits to tourism from the conservation of heritage sites. However to maximise the tourism benefit for heritage places, conservation needs to be balanced with appropriate access to, and interpretation of these sites. Conservation which prevents locals and visitors from understanding the historic importance of a site has limited value. Likewise, facilitating access to a heritage place without sufficient interpretation to share the stories of significance of that site is also a missed opportunity.

Facilitating a policy framework which allows appropriate conservation, meaningful interpretation and aptly manages visitation to historic sites is a huge challenge.

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Whilst there are a range of funding programs available to assist heritage organisations (and in some cases individuals) achieve conservation projects, the application processes for most of these schemes are cumbersome and onerous, especially for volunteer organisations. In addition to the ongoing need to simplify the application process for grants, the NTTC recommends the following:

1. developing a new grant program with the aim of increasing the professionalism of small regional museums, by providing funding for staff and volunteer committees to develop business skills (including the areas of marketing, financial reporting, pricing and packaging tourism product and maximising outcomes from volunteer labour)
2. continuing but extending the Department of Environment and Heritage's *Sharing Australia's Stories* program to facilitate the linking of strategic stories between destinations to maximise the benefit for visitors and regional centres (this concept is similar to that being advocated by Category 2 of Australian Tourism Development Program)
3. extending the *Grants for Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations* (GVEHO) program to allow small incorporated bodies (eg those that have less than 50 members) to apply - hence making it more relevant to heritage organisations in regional area
4. encouraging projects utilising Private Public Partnerships to make funding available to support the exploration of new or the further development of existing products
5. providing funds (through a grant program) to support maintenance and improvements in tourism infrastructure in conserved places (eg signage/ displays, access, lightening).

The NTTC submission has been prepared in support of the Northern Territory Government's Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts contribution, to provide additional information and insight from a tourism perspective.

Yours sincerely

MAREE TETLOW
MANAGING DIRECTOR