



Submission to the Australian Heritage Strategy

June 2014

1. Clarification of the scope of the Australian Heritage Strategy

The Australian Heritage Strategy, when finalised, will provide national leadership for an important part of Australia's heritage activity. However the draft, in its current form, is not explicit in scope or precise in the language used, particularly as it intersects with collecting organisations such as libraries, museums, archives and galleries.

"Heritage" is defined broadly in the draft (see the definition and diagram on p.12) but the Strategy and its recommendations address only those parts of heritage that are within the sphere of the Department of Environment and under the legislation that governs the work of this Department, i.e. Australia's immoveable heritage - the sites, places and natural environment.

The Australian Heritage Strategy addresses only the domain illustrated by the bottom half of the diagram on p.12. Though moveable heritage may be called upon to enhance the understanding of immoveable heritage (the top half) it is not within the scope of the Strategy.

Australia's moveable heritage, which is collected and preserved by major public institutions such as the members of National & State Libraries Australasia (www.nsla.org.au), constitutes a significant portion of our nation's cultural heritage and research infrastructure. Libraries have a broad purpose and mission – to enable education, business development, literacy, critical thinking, equality of access to information and knowledge, and to preserve and make available Australia's culture and history for future generations.

The range of challenges and issues that libraries are addressing, particularly as information is increasingly digital, cannot be considered to fall under the Australian Heritage Strategy as it is currently drafted.

The scope of the strategy must be explicitly stated and the implication that it addresses moveable heritage removed.

2. Libraries and Collecting Institutions as Partners

Though outside the scope of the Australian Heritage Strategy, libraries and collecting institutions are important partners for the sector in addressing the challenges affecting Australia's immoveable heritage.

Libraries support the understanding and analysis of immoveable cultural heritage and we collect and make available the primary source materials, publications and the outcomes of research in many

forms, eg. oral histories, maps, photographs, sound recordings, film, environmental assessment plans, government publications, born digital materials, original archives and journals.

The heritage workers, custodians and communities engaging directly with Australia's immovable heritage rely heavily on library collections and services to do their work.

The Strategy currently recommends fostering greater collaboration between the heritage and tourism sectors. There is an opportunity to broaden this to also focus on opportunities to partner with collecting institutions, to develop new programming and improve reach into the community. Libraries, both public libraries and the State/National Libraries, have deep engagement with their communities, and there are opportunities for local, regional and national partnerships.

The priority of the Australian Heritage Strategy (p.25) to "promote greater knowledge and engagement with our heritage" points directly to the need to explicitly recognise libraries as key partners.

3. Role of specific examples in the Draft Australian Heritage Strategy

In line with clarifying the scope of the Australian Heritage Strategy concerning immovable and moveable heritage, some specific examples mentioned should be reviewed.

As a general comment, the inclusion of examples across the Strategy without the context of why these are singled out and not others can distract from the national leadership message.

National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents the State, Territory and National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand. These ten major public research libraries work together to enable people to access, use and share local and global knowledge and ideas.

Please note: Each of the ten NSLA member libraries works within different government jurisdictions. The National Library of New Zealand is part of the Department of Internal Affairs, a New Zealand government department. The views expressed in this letter should not be taken to reflect the views of the National Library of New Zealand nor of the New Zealand Government.



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