

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NEW SOUTH WALES) POLICY ON AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE

PREAMBLE

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) was formed in 1945, as an organisation to address community concerns that commercial activities and government policy at that time were destroying parts of the natural and built environment, which should be preserved for future generations. This concern has evolved over ensuing decades to a role of advocacy on behalf of the community, for the incorporation of environmental and heritage issues and objectives into the process of government decision-making and commercial development.

This background and the National Trust's long experience in the process of heritage and environmental advocacy led to a conclusion that the draft National Heritage Strategy (NHS)ⁱ, released in April, 2014 was misconceived.

The strategy suggested that the Australian Government should be the 'leader' in environmental and heritage management. This assertion relies on a concept, which suggests that governments 'lead' communities. Rather than 'leadership', what is required is wise, informed and balanced decision-making on behalf of the community. Much of the work of the National Trust, over the last six decades has been to respond to the 'leadership' initiatives of governments, in order to produce better long-term development outcomes for the natural and built environment, for the benefit of the broader community.

The strategy also envisaged that community participation can be encouraged by providing support for local festivals and celebrations. This only addressed a small part of the community's existing participation in 'heritage conservation', entirely ignoring the role of non-government community organisations such as the National Trust. In addition, protest marches, picket lines, sit-ins and petitions are equally an expression of community sentiment for heritage conservation. Most importantly, community access to legal representation in the judicial process has proven to be a key means for communities to have heritage values reflected in development outcomes.

The strategy treated the environment and heritage as separate concepts when they are fundamentally intertwined. One affects the other and both affect the ability of the community to engage with and have confidence that government and commerce are acting in the interests of the greater community, rather than for sectional interests and short-term political objectives.

POLICY

1. The National Trust believes that the community, individual heritage property owners and non-government organisations such as the National Trust and ICOMOS are carrying the major responsibility for identifying and conserving heritage places because successive State and Federal Governments have not properly resourced this work. The Trust will lobby for an Australian Government commitment to true and effective support for this work through higher funding and staffing levels and the reinstatement of funding for the NSW Environmental Defenders' Office and encouragement of the NSW Government to facilitate the statutory heritage listing of National Trust Register listed places.
2. The National Trust will oppose the downgrading and/or reduction in area of existing Australian World Heritage Areas.
3. The National Trust will urge that there be a proper Australian Government investigation of the significant part played by the built, natural and cultural heritage in Australia's tourism industry valued at \$96 billion.
4. The National Trust will urge that Commonwealth education policies should recognize the importance of training specialists in all aspects of the identification, documentation, protection and conservation of Australia's built, natural and cultural heritage.
5. The National Trust will express its grave concerns at a "one stop shop" development approval process where essential information on heritage and environment matters will not be properly

considered and/or may not be available.

6. The National Trust will urge that the objects and principles of the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Act be upheld, particularly “to provide for the protection and conservation of heritage”, the “principles of ecologically sustainable development”, the principle of inter-generational equity and the precautionary principle.

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Approved by National Trust Board: 25 June 2014

¹ *A Strategy for Australia's Heritage (Draft for Consultation) Australian Government Department of the Environment April, 2014*