



# NATIONAL TRUST

Federal Election Priorities for  
Heritage:

A Statement from the  
National Trusts of Australia

April 2019



# Australia's Heritage Makes a Difference

Australia's heritage matters—it creates a unique identity, a sense of place and a strong reminder of our proud history.

Our heritage places, from buildings to landscapes, songlines to character areas, and trees to shipwrecks, represent our story, our people and our shared connections. Australia's heritage makes a difference!

## The National Trusts Make a Difference

The National Trusts of Australia comprise eight community-based, non-government, not-for-profit organisations. We are a member-based, not-for-profit charity that represents the interests of more than **80,000** members across Australia.

**The National Trusts of Australia's mission, as Australia's leading conservation and heritage tourism organisation, is the protection, conservation and celebration of Australia's environmental, built and cultural heritage.**

The National Trust is Australia's longest standing and most respected voice on heritage protection and conservation.

**This document is a Statement from the National Trusts of Australia on our heritage priorities for the 2019 Federal election. It clearly sets out our position and asks for a response from all major political parties and candidates.**

Wolston Farmhouse, Wacol Brisbane—celebrating 50 years as a National Trust property in March 2019



## Snapshot of Australia's Heritage



80,000+

National Trust members



1.84 million

Annual visits to National Trust owned or managed properties in Australia every year



280,000+

National Trust direct supporters (e-news subscribers and social media)



32.2 billion

Total visitor spend annually for cultural and heritage



34.6 million

Visitors to cultural and heritage places each year in Australia



1 million

Visitors to the annual Australian Heritage Festival



116

Places listed on the National Heritage Register



278

National Trust owned/managed properties in Australia



40,000 +

Heritage places listed on the Registers of the 8 state and territory National Trusts

## Australia's Heritage: What we need to remedy



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Public sector resourcing at all levels does **NOT** reflect the value of heritage to the community, the value of heritage tourism and regional job opportunities<sup>1</sup>



Indigenous cultural heritage continues to be **AT RISK** from incremental destruction and the cumulative impacts of large scale landscape change



**LACK** of action on climate change and a **FAILURE** to take definitive steps to meet global goals and protect heritage places from the impacts of climate change



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**INADEQUATE** funding lets down private owners of heritage listed places who are required by law to maintain their heritage properties to minimum standards of repair



Government heritage departments at all levels are **UNDER** resourced and **UNDER** funded



The ongoing **LOSS** of Heritage Trade skills in Australia leaves heritage places vulnerable to poorly executed repairs and conservation work



**NO** formal mechanism for collaboration with major non-government heritage organisations

<sup>1</sup> Mackay R (2016). Heritage: Heritage. In: Australia state of the environment 2016, Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy, Canberra, <https://soe.environment.gov.au/theme/heritage>, DOI 10.4226/94/58b658bbe13a0



## HERITAGE PRIORITY # 1: Protection of Australia's Heritage

Managing Australia's heritage requires action to protect places from pressures and retain their values. However, protective heritage legislation has been systematically watered down over the last decade and much of our heritage is being lost or is at risk from the effects of incremental damage. Substantial gaps remain in legislated protection for Australian heritage and the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* requires reviewing and strengthening. Indigenous heritage in particular is vulnerable, with the importance of 'traditional' or 'associative' values needing support and acknowledgment that Indigenous heritage sites in coastal areas will be heavily impacted by climate change.

Government departments at all levels are under-resourced and understaffed, and the Australian Heritage Council suffers from statutory limitations on its power. The ability of heritage departments to meet timeframes expected by the community for listing and management of heritage places is greatly hampered by the lack of resources provided to these departments.

Identifying and protecting heritage places is fundamental to ensuring that they are appropriately conserved, celebrated and passed on to future generations, however our lists must evolve and adapt as our understanding of what heritage is evolves and adapts. The development of the National Heritage List into a list that is truly representative of Australia's most outstanding heritage places has suffered from under-resourcing and is not reflect a true representation of Australia's heritage.



*Broadway Hotel, Woolloongabba (QLD). Damage from consecutive fires and internal flooding has placed this building at risk of demolition by neglect and highlighted weaknesses in State legislation.*

### THE NATIONAL TRUSTS ARE ADVOCATING FOR:

- **Substantial investment into the National Heritage List program** to ensure that it is truly representative of Australia's outstanding places and stories, especially Indigenous places.
- **An audit of the effectiveness of Commonwealth Heritage Legislation** to either improve or replace it with a stronger and more effective model. The existence of stronger national legislation will set a higher benchmark for state and territorial legislation.
- **Increased resourcing for the Department of Environment and Energy's Heritage Branch** to ensure that the Australian Heritage Strategy can be properly implemented and appropriately reviewed; to ensure that more National Heritage List nominations can be assessed and to ensure that the Department can undertake adequate strategic reviews of legislation, policy and practice.
- **Strengthening the statutory role of the Australian Heritage Council** so that it can become a true champion for Australia's heritage.
- **The demonstration of Commonwealth leadership for the shared responsibility for Australia's heritage** between all governments, the community, private and business sectors. Including re-establishing regular consultative mechanisms with peak cultural heritage bodies, including the National Trusts of Australia and Australia ICOMOS.

**If elected, how will your party respond to these priorities?**



## HERITAGE PRIORITY # 2:

### Conservation of Australia's Heritage

The irreversible impact of climate change on heritage places and their longevity needs urgent attention. The State of Environment Heritage 2016 report notes that “*Climate change poses a major challenge for heritage owners and managers, and has the potential for high-impact and irreversible damage in the absence of remedial action.*” This will affect places of local, state, national and world heritage significance in Australia, including the Great Barrier Reef, the Murray-Darling Basin and Indigenous heritage sites in coastal areas.

The successive decline in funding for the conservation of heritage places continues to be a major issue. Recommended schemes, such as revolving funds for heritage property acquisition and restoration, and national heritage lotteries, have not been adequately investigated, leaving privately owned heritage places at risk and vulnerable to deterioration and demolition by neglect.

Landscapes, towns and places vulnerable to resource extraction face huge impacts on their heritage assets and the cumulative impact of these effects is neither taken into account or properly considered. Meanwhile, heritage assets in cities and towns are facing unprecedented threat from increased density caused by rapidly rising populations and the continued migration from ‘bush to the city’.

The decline and disappearance of traditional heritage trade skills presents a significant threat to our continued ability to conserve and restore historic sites. The use of traditional trades is essential for achieving high quality conservation of culturally significant places in accordance with the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter*. A systematic program of training which links existing practitioners with willing participants in delivering detailed skills training is needed.



Images: The loss of traditional skills and threat of climate change are urgent threats to Australia's heritage

#### THE NATIONAL TRUSTS ARE ADVOCATING FOR:

- A program of **accredited job skill training** that links practitioners with apprentices and creates jobs in the fields related to traditional heritage trade skills.
- Incentives for practitioners to train apprentices in **traditional skills programs**.
- A commitment to **investigating and implementing proper heritage funding programs for places at risk via a national revolving heritage fund run collaboratively with the National Trusts of Australia**.
- Proper funding for privately owned heritage places via a **national heritage lottery scheme**.
- The development of a **Climate Change Risk for Heritage** study to identify the likely types of impact and potential preparation and response measures.
- An **associated training and assistance package for heritage places at risk from climate change** should be urgently implemented.
- A **mandatory impact assessment of the cumulative effect of resource extraction activities on heritage places, archaeological resources and cultural landscapes**.
- **The development and implementation of mechanisms that ensure that the contribution of heritage places and character areas to the liveability of cities is considered in densification models**.

If elected, how will your party respond to these priorities?



## HERITAGE PRIORITY # 3:

### Celebration of Australia's Heritage

'Australia has a rich natural and cultural heritage that underpins our sense of place and national identity and makes a positive contribution to the nation's wellbeing. We value our heritage and have a strong desire to see Australia's significant heritage places recognised and protected.' (Australian Heritage Strategy, 2015)

The Australian government, non-government organisations and the community celebrate, commemorate and enjoy Australia's heritage places in many ways. This celebration and appreciation builds a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in our national identity. The Australian government should initiate, support and develop programs and activities that celebrate Australia's heritage and contribute to authentic heritage tourism experiences.

Heritage tourism is a major area for celebration and interaction with heritage places. The heritage and cultural markets contribute 34.6 million national visitors per year with \$32.2 billion in total visitor spend annually. It offers both opportunities and challenges for Australia's heritage, as outlined in the recently prepared **National Heritage Tourism Directions Paper** (prepared by the National Trusts of Australia and funded by the Commonwealth). However, there is little coordinated assistance for the development of sustainable heritage tourism initiatives.

The Australian Heritage Festival, coordinated by the National Trusts of Australia annually, is the largest community based heritage festival celebrating Australia's heritage. In 2018, the Australian Heritage Festival:

- Mobilised volunteers and community to come together with a sense of purpose and connection and organise 1,253 events celebrating cultural, natural and built heritage nationally.
- Attracted 441,000 visitors to events across the nation.
- Digitally engaged 80,958 people with heritage stories over the four week Festival period.



#### THE NATIONAL TRUSTS ARE ADVOCATING FOR:

- *The re-introduction of the word 'Heritage' into the appropriate Commonwealth Ministerial portfolio as an indication of the government's commitment to the value and importance of our country's heritage and the value of heritage tourism.*
- *Investment in sustainable and coordinated heritage tourism initiatives that promote the contribution of heritage places to domestic and international tourism numbers.*
- *Investment in non-government heritage organisations that can develop and implement sound models for heritage tourism.*
- *Stronger support for the initiation and development of programs and activities that celebrate Australia's heritage.*
- *An ongoing commitment to funding of the Australian Heritage Festival.*
- *The implementation and regular review of the Australian Heritage Strategy.*
- *The creation of formal mechanisms for collaborations between government and non-government heritage organisations.*

**If elected, how will your party respond to these priorities?**



The National Trusts of Australia are calling for the commitment of all political parties, party leaders and individual candidates to protect, conserve and celebrate Australia's environmental, cultural and built heritage by supporting our initiatives in the 2019 Federal election and for the next 4 years.



We request a response to this document from Australia's major political parties and candidates. We will communicate your responses with our 80,000+ members and 240,000 + direct supporters across Australia, to inform their choices in the week leading up to the 2019 Federal Election.



# NATIONAL TRUST

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