



2022 Federal Election Heritage Priorities

The National Trusts
of Australia

A photograph of a family of four (a man, a woman, and two children) smiling and looking at a koala being held by a woman. The family is outdoors in a natural setting with trees in the background. The man is on the left, wearing a blue shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored shirt. The two children are in the center, looking at the koala. The koala is being held by a woman on the right. The text 'To build stronger communities, create resilient places and inspire inclusive experiences' is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

*To build stronger communities, create resilient
places and inspire inclusive experiences*



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

About the National Trusts

The National Trusts of Australia are a network of community-based, not-for-profit organisations that represents the interests of more than 80,000 members across Australia.

The National Trusts are Australia's longest standing and most respected voices on heritage protection, conservation and cultural tourism.

We work in collaboration to inspire communities and governments to appreciate, protect, conserve and celebrate the diversity of heritage places and landscapes in ways that build vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities.

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

We are calling on candidates for the Federal Election to respond to our 2022 Heritage Priorities.

Your support for Australia's natural, built and cultural heritage is a strategic investment in our country's future sustainability.

Inquiries

For more information or to respond to these priorities, please contact:

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Message from the Chair

The National Trusts of Australia last released their “Priorities for Heritage” in 2018 outlining to current and prospective governments our perspective on the major threats facing Australia’s heritage and offering solutions, policy suggestions and a way forward.

Much has changed in the following three years; the Covid pandemic that brought the world to stop had immeasurable impacts on visitation and conservation of heritage places, and on the organisations and charities that undertake this crucial work. Coming on the back of the catastrophic 2019/2020 bushfire season, these events have highlighted the urgent need for our heritage places and organisations to build resilience, be risk- prepared, and be economically stable to weather the storm.

Our 2022 Priorities reflects this changed context, focusing on the need to future proof heritage places and organisations, offer solutions for communities to build resilience, inclusivity and diversity through their heritage, and assist them to bounce back as a dynamic part of the tourism sector.

We also carry through some Priorities from our 2018 Statement – in particular we noted in 2018 the urgent need for better protection of indigenous heritage places and the threat to indigenous places from

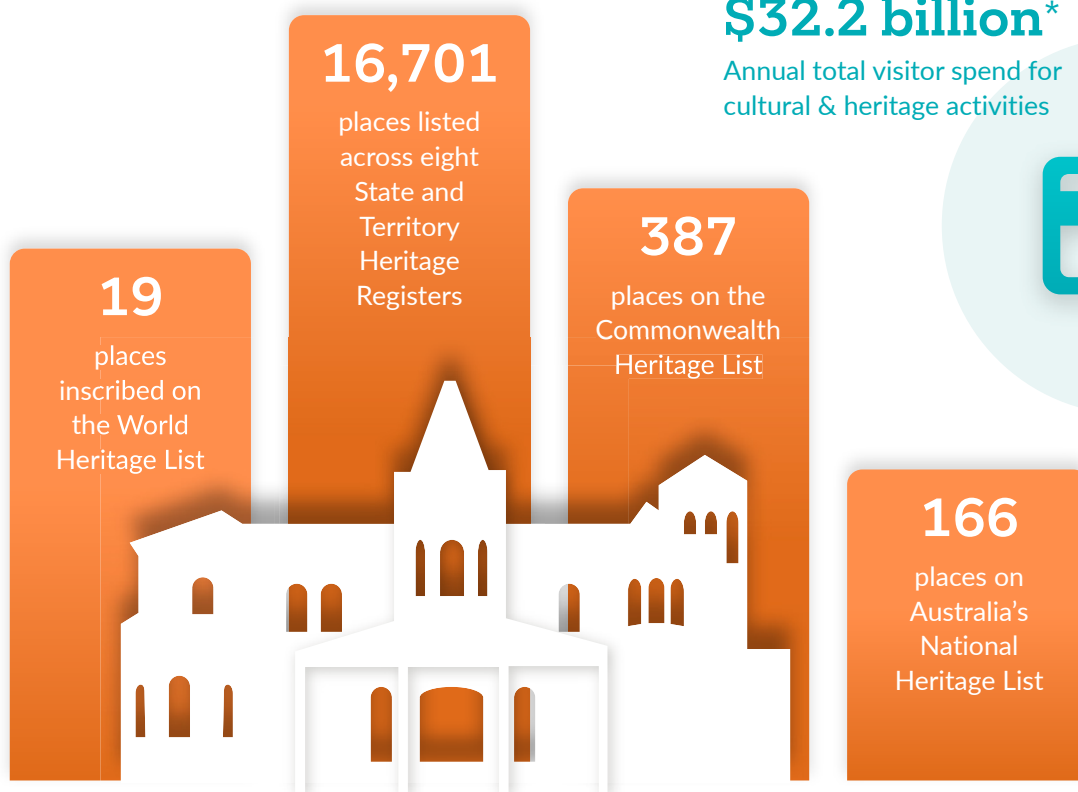
resource extraction and weak Federal heritage laws. Sadly, 18 months after our Statement was released, these noted threats and weaknesses resulted in the destruction of Juukan Gorge. A shameful page in the history of Australia’s heritage protection that we aim to never again witness.

The National Trusts of Australia are proud to release this Statement and urge the Australian government, the opposition and all other political parties to give bipartisan support and endorsement of this Priorities Statement. It is a shared responsibility of community, organisations and governments to be the curators, not the liquidators, of our heritage places and landscapes. We look forward to working closely with the government to achieve our shared goals.

Graham Goerke

Chair - Australian Council of National Trusts

Australia's Heritage at a Glance



34.6 million*

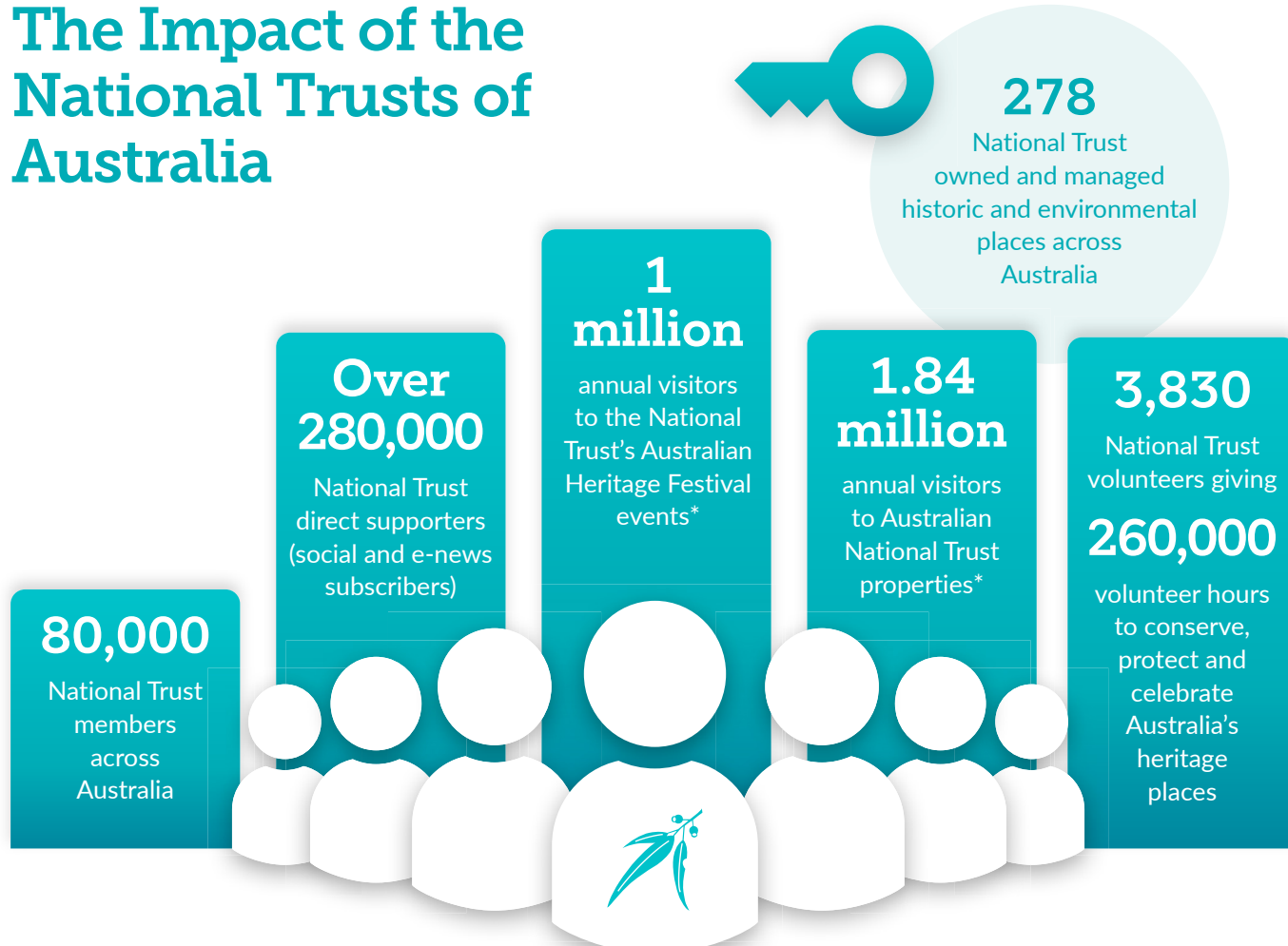
Annual visitors to cultural and heritage places

\$32.2 billion*

Annual total visitor spend for cultural & heritage activities



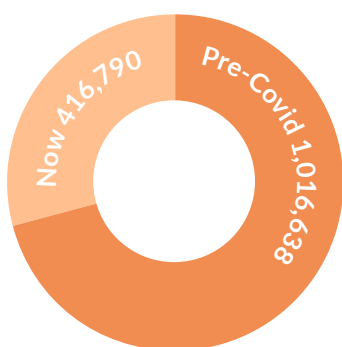
The Impact of the National Trusts of Australia



*2018 -2019 pre-Covid figures

Impacts of COVID-19 on the National Trusts of Australia

Visitation across 4 National Trusts (NSW, VIC, QLD and WA)



Drop of 599,848 visits
59% DECREASE in visitation numbers

Case Study

Prolonged international and domestic border closures combined with lockdown-induced closure of National Trust properties to the public has had immense impact.

The six Victorian lockdowns require their National Trust to close its properties to the public and at times to staff for a cumulative 39.5 weeks since early 2020. These closures impact community outreach and engagement, schools' education programs, visitation/retail/F&B income and important maintenance and conservation programs.

Similar impact was felt in Queensland and New South Wales, with Queensland particularly suffering from a lack of international visitors to the Gold Coast where its iconic Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary is based.

Value of loss of visitation income over 6 National Trusts (QLD, VIC, NSW, SA, WA and TAS)



Admissions revenue

Drop of \$11,806,632
64.68% DROP in visitation income

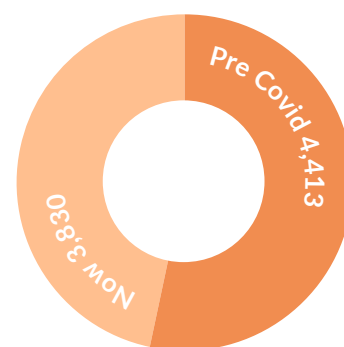
Case Study

Queensland and Victoria suffered significant loss from the drop in visitation.

Queensland visitation income dropped from \$12,300,000 to \$4,560,000; a substantial 63% drop in visitation income.

Victoria's visitation income dropped by a staggering 79.8%, reducing their visitation income by more than \$2.6 million.

Volunteer Numbers and Hours across 5 National Trusts (SA, QLD, WA, NSW, VIC)



Impact of covid on volunteer numbers:
583 volunteers LOST

Case Study

New South Wales suffered a drop in volunteers from 1500 volunteers undertaking 105,000 hours of work, to now just 1200 volunteers undertaking 75,000 hours of work.

This is a loss of 30,000 volunteer work hours—or 750 full-time weeks of work, or \$1,275,000 worth of volunteer time/value.



Memberships

Covid and its associated prolonged lockdowns and border closures affected the ability of some members to sustain their membership status and reduced the attractiveness of membership (which provides free national and international visits to National trust properties).

Case study

As an example, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria each lost between 3,000 and 2,500 members per state. The loss of our long-term supporters cannot be downplayed and the Trusts will have to strategically invest in attracting new members over the coming years, as attracting a new member costs more than retaining an existing member.

Policy Priority: Economic Recovery through Conservation

Extensive Covid 19 lockdowns have resulted in the “moth balling of vulnerable heritage places.

The drastic drop in visitation income and grants programs created a net negative impact on organisations that own and care for heritage places, resulting in less money for conservation projects, less opportunities for volunteers and damage from irregular maintenance during lockdown.

The Covid pandemic has created public health, social and economic challenges. There is an urgent need for a robust response by the Federal Government to prioritise the recovery of cultural organisations, heritage places and the communities that rely on them for jobs and economic activity.

Assistance for Conservation Organisations to Build Back Better

Heritage organisations continue to suffer enormous economic loss from Covid, reducing their ability to retain trained staff, to care for their heritage assets, to develop programs and to advocate effectively.

The larger National Trusts lost nearly 600,000 combined visitors, a 59% drop, resulting in a loss of more than \$11 million in visitation fees alone.

Targeted funding for National Trust projects that have high impact is urgently need – such projects generate trade-level jobs (often in regional areas), engage local communities and ensure these places are tourist-ready when travel returns to normal.

Recommendations:

- The Government should immediately re-establish the National Trust Partnerships Program for the economic recovery of these vital heritage charities.
- The NTPP funding should focus on assisting the National Trusts to implement catch up maintenance at their heritage properties, undertake urgent preventative maintenance programs and undertake broad scale conservation projects.



Targeted Grants to support ‘Shovel Worthy’ Conservation Projects

There is a broader need for heritage places to receive targeted grants to improve their conservation, presentation and interpretation before broad- scale tourism returns.

Heritage places suffered from lack of maintenance and staff to undertake work during lockdowns and are struggling to allocate funds after more than a year of economic loss.

Adequate funding is needed to prevent snowballing maintenance costs, freeing up cash reserves for building business back, and creating vibrant communities with civic pride.

Recommendations:

- The Government should create a pool of grant funding for conservation projects at heritage listed places that focuses on maintenance, repair, conservation and interpretation projects.
- The allocation of these grants should move from a “shovel ready” mindset to a “shovel worthy” approach, prioritising projects at heritage places that can demonstrate a sizeable decrease in revenue since March 2020.
- Consider the need to focus grants on industries that have suffered inequitable loss (ie historic theatres, historic pubs and restaurants; university heritage buildings, heritage places that are opened to the community and accessible, and community owned assets).

Image: Restoring 1860s miners cottage in Burra National Heritage area (SA) with traditional trades training.



Policy Priority: Protecting Heritage Places

Heritage places remain at risk across Australia from multiple threats.

Inadequate identification, ineffective legislation, under resourced departments, over-development and large scale resource extraction are eroding their values and impacting their authenticity.

Ensuring heritage places are adequately identified and effectively protected is an immediate priority.

Never Again: Strengthening Heritage Legislation

Substantial gaps remain in legislated protection for Australian heritage – highlighted in the recent Review of the EPBC Act “Never Again” report.

Heritage legislation needs urgent strengthening with Indigenous heritage particularly vulnerable to inadequate identification, cumulative impact and climate change.

Recommendations:

- The Government should urgently enact the recommendations contained in the Review of the EPBC Act report “Never Again”.
- The Government should continue to work with States and Territories to ensure heritage legislation is effective, robust and properly protects heritage places.
- The Government should undertake an urgent audit of the condition of Australia’s heritage places. This baseline data is needed to support proper analysis of the cumulative and direct impact of threats, to target resources to vulnerable places, and to track the effectiveness of our heritage legislation in conserving the values and condition of our heritage.

Better Resourcing for Better Outcomes

Government heritage departments at all levels are under-resourced and understaffed, hampering their ability to meet timeframes expected by the community for listing and management of heritage places.

The Australian Heritage Council notably suffers from under-resourcing which reduces their ability to process and assess nominations, or be public champions for heritage. Equally, statutory limitations on the AHC’s power reduces their ability to effectively influence government and develop policy.

Recommendations:

- 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 heritage places.
- Elevating ‘Heritage’ to the Department’s name to highlight the importance of heritage.



Top image: Pioneer Women’s Trail Walk through Adelaide Hills (SA).
Left: Play reading for the *Louvre Lounge* Series at Audit House (NT). Photo by Paz Tassone.

Enrich the List

Identifying and protecting heritage places is fundamental to ensuring they are protected, conserved and celebrated. 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 a true representation of Australia's diverse heritage.

Recommendations:

- The Government should substantially invest in the National Heritage List program to ensure that it is truly representative of Australia's diverse places, stories and communities.
- The Government should target future research programs to identify places that illustrate the diverse types of Australian heritage with specific targets to identify places of value to underrepresented communities, such as indigenous, migrant, female, disabled and LGBTIQ communities.



Above image: Hou Wang Temple (QLD).

Below image: *Bending the Bars, 40 Years of Decriminalisation* exhibition at Old Melbourne Gaol (VIC).



Disaster Preparedness & Increased Tourism Capacity for Places and Communities

The recent pandemic and bushfire crisis has highlighted the urgent need for disaster preparedness programs for heritage places and the organisations that care for them. The cultural and heritage tourism industry needs to re-build capacity in the face of future uncertainties to future proof their industries.

Disaster Preparedness

The effect of climate change (including rising sea levels, increased high impact storms and intense bushfire seasons) continues to impact our world.

As outlined in our 2018 Heritage Priorities Statement, heritage places and organisations are even more vulnerable to these risks.

Recommendations:

- The Government should adopt a formal policy to provide more support and incentives for projects that sympathetically reuse and retrofit existing buildings, rather than those focused on new builds.
- The Government should work with key stakeholders such as the National Trust and Australia ICOMOS to develop a Climate Change Risk for Heritage study, seeking to identify the likely types of impact and potential preparation and response measures.

- Government grants should assist charities, community groups and owners of heritage places to future proof both their heritage assets and their organisations, prioritising projects that develop risk preparedness plans, the implementation of such plans and on the ground works.
- Governments should provide tailored grants to assist heritage places adapt to the post-Covid world with digitisation of archives and collections, and the development of skills for virtual tours and learnings.

Rebuilding Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism (including Indigenous, cultural and eco tourism) generates significant economic benefits for cities, regional and rural areas; creating jobs, activating places and generating a strong sense of civic pride.

Pre-Covid, heritage and cultural tourism attracted 34.6 million annual visitors, generating \$32.2 billion in visitor spends.

The cultural, eco and heritage tourism industries have been significantly affected by Covid restrictions, lock downs and border changes. Capacity building and assistance to build back better should be an immediate government priority.

Recommendations:

- Support is needed to activate sites and precincts into World class heritage experiences showcasing and conserving Australia's unique historic, cultural and natural places and their stories.
- Storytelling (digital and face-to-face) is the new focus of tourism and the heritage sector needs support to develop its capabilities in capturing and sharing stories in ways which resonate with new visitor markets and create unique, memorable experiences.
- The National Trust is well placed to develop and disseminate quality training and learning resources and visitor experience development plans for heritage places. A dedicated NTPP funding should be created to support this new trend and build capacity within the heritage industry.

Image: Wolston Farmhouse (QLD)



As a Federal election candidate, your support for these initiatives is vital. We strongly urge you to make a Statement in response to the National Trust 2022 Federal Election Heritage Priorities.



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Below image: Aboriginal Culture show at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary (QLD).

